

RAZZORCAKE



DELAY

Liz Prince

The Real Kids

No Small Children

One Punk's Guide to Pinball

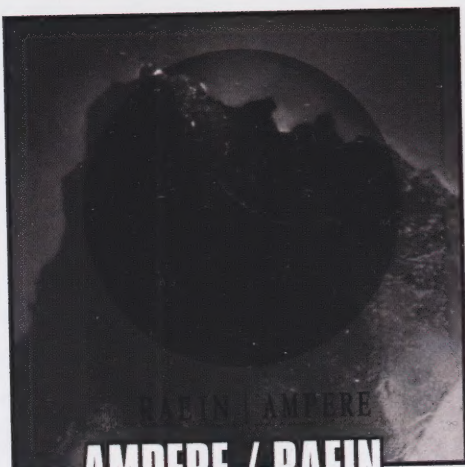
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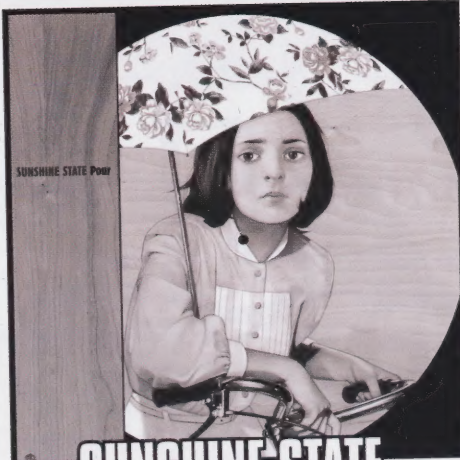


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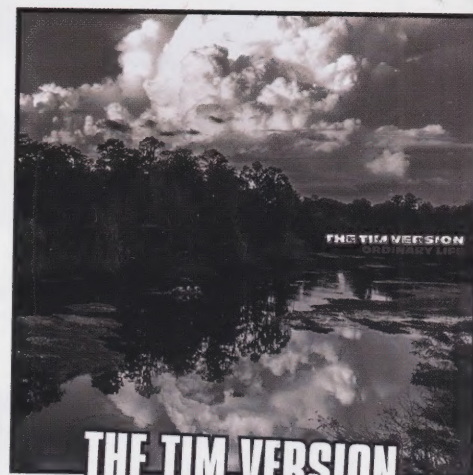




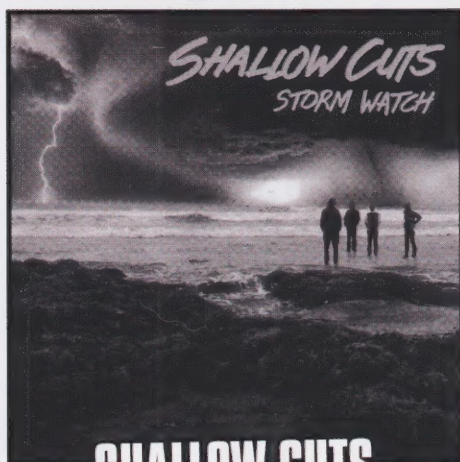
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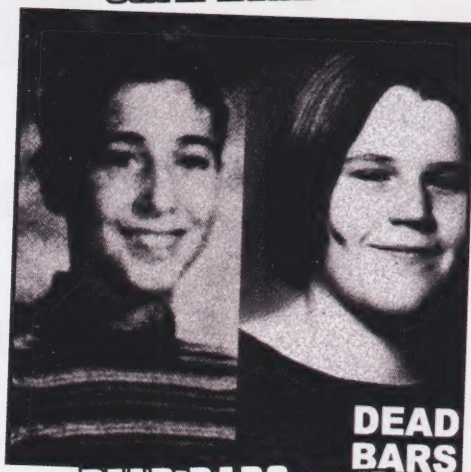
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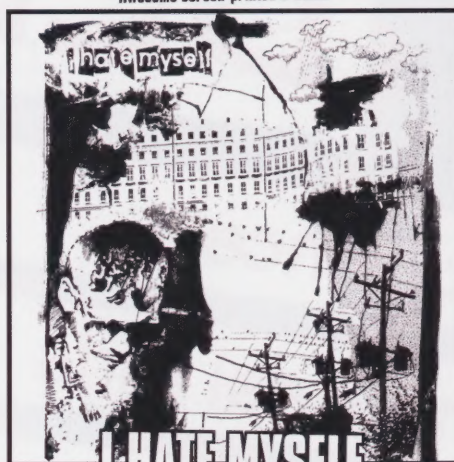
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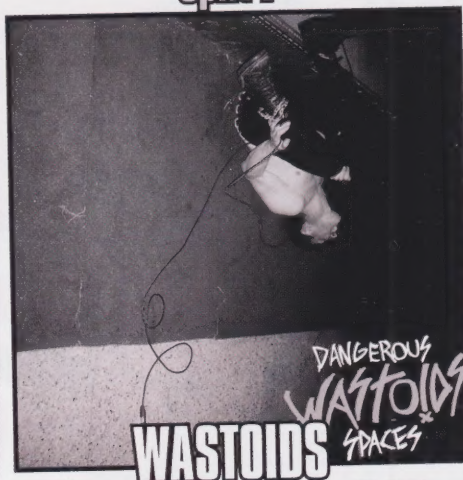
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Through out 2014 we surveyed new subscribers asking how they heard about Razorcake and why they decided to order a subscription. The answers were varied, reflecting the uniqueness of the DIY punk experience. But there a couple answers that were repeated.

A somewhat common response to the first question was that they had been introduced to Razorcake through a friend. So to all you friends out there: *thank you!* Keep up the good work. A word of mouth campaign is our dream. Your personal endorsement makes us proud.

The leading response to the second question was that they ordered the subscription because they wanted to support the magazine. Again: *thank you!* It is very much appreciated.

Subscriptions and advertising is what keeps us afloat. We can't physically fit anymore advertising into the magazine, but the world is full of people who have yet to subscribe.

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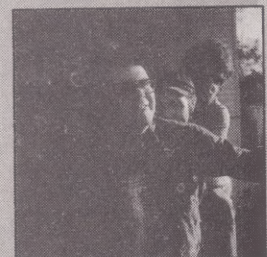
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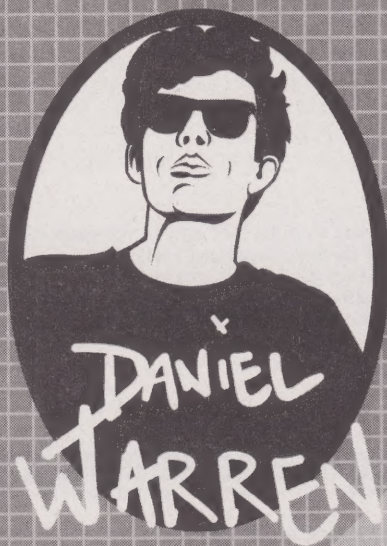
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THANKS TO ALL THE READERS AND ATTENDEES OF LA ZINE FEST & RAZORCAKE'S

A ZINESTER READING



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Ownership Versus Consumption

Being poor sucks. But buying shit beyond the essentials doesn't empower you. It makes you a consumer. It's how you consume that makes the difference.

I think I'm pretty good at making zines and fixing bicycles. They share a lot in common. You serve as the engine to get them to move. You must put energy into them. The processes to create either are transparent. Zine: make a template, talk to people, take photos, write, lay out, print. I see every step of the way that goes into making *Razorcake*. Tire went flat on the bike? Find the hole, pull out the repair kit, scuff the tube, patch, glue, set, ride.

Things go wrong. Some are complicated, frustrating, and inconvenient. With a zine, there are corrupted or missing fonts and cryptic error messages in ever-drifting software. Or the chain slips on a bike when torquing uphill, a wheel's out of true and the spoke nipple just broke. Damn. Not all fixes are instantaneous. Not all diagnoses are correct. But to see it all in front of me—cable, gears, paper, staples—they're tangible, surmountable.

I take some level of comfort with zines and bicycles that when something isn't working correctly, I can look at it, isolate it, and devise a plan. However small—from a rear derailleur to converting fonts to outlines for an interview to output properly—that's empowerment. That's self-reliance. That's ownership. I purchased something I myself didn't make—a bicycle, a computer—but I use them as tools to make zines and to ride all over Los Angeles.

The brands of these items, to me, aren't nearly as important as what I can make from the devices. Corporations, through carefully constructed and controlled proxies of "communities," are ever-more adept at blurring the line between consumption and ownership. It's in their best interest. The monitor I'm staring into right now has a swatch

of black electrical tape over its corporate logo. The monitor helps enable me to write this editorial. I researched the price and quality of monitors. I purchased one that was in my budget and had a low repair rate. I am not "friends" with the monitor or its parent company. I do not "like" them on social media. It's a good monitor. It doesn't make my eyes hurt. When I got pulled over by a cop on my bike and he asked for the make and model, I said, "Black." I invited him to look for any distinguishing marks on the frame. After an inspection, he wrote "black" on the ticket.

I love riding my bike. It's a direct result of a doctor telling me four years ago that I had high blood pressure and cholesterol and I should get on meds—meds that I would possibly have to take for the rest of my life. I asked the doctor, "What about diet and exercise? Give me a year," I said. "I'll check-in in six months." She shrugged. Consumption can promise instant gratification. Today, my cholesterol is optimal and my blood pressure's no longer borderline. Ownership is lifelong, one slow rotation at a time. The empowerment that can develop from ownership takes work—you're your own boss.

Here's where DIY comes in. I do my best to support other real people I admire. These people make things that are rad. I often buy these things, but let's be clear. These relationships are different from what corporations promise. The human-made, smaller batch object, often based in thrift and generosity—a subscription to a zine, a record, a T-shirt, a book, a website—means something far beyond profit margins or "building shareholder value." These DIY things have invisible cables, wires, and energies that connect real people to one another that truthfully can't be replicated.

I hope you can see that you are holding one of those things right now.

—Todd Taylor

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Cover design by Keith Rosson (keithrosson.com)
Including photos by Jonathan Velazquez and
Danielle Kordani

**"If there ever was
compassion, then its
story's been sold. Stripped
down for parts and then
left in the cold."**

—The Tim Version,
"The Future of Humanity Is Dogs," *Ordinary Life*

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THANK YOU: He had no way of knowing that the color of the *Delay* cover is really close to Razorcake HQ's exterior paint thanks to Keith Rosson; "They're wingtips" to illustrate how ye olde Sean is—thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo; No political party has the market cornered on sadness. Thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Jim's column; Meat from the back of a pick-up, Dream Phone backyard tent, propane tank thanks to Steve Thueson for his illos. in Cassie J. Sneider's column; Undead Kennedys censorship sticker (for the kids) thanks to Marcos Siref for his illo. in Norb's column; According to Bill Pinkel's illo. in Dale's column, my hand is up Gene Simmons's ass. I'm fine with that; Viking polar bear stares at tundra Chicken thanks to Kasia Oniszczyk for her photo; Cops, man, they'll take anything cool and beat you with it (pinball wooden legs as billy clubs) thanks to Kayla Greet, Gene Hwang, and Eric Baskauskas for the "One Punk's Guide to Pinball" article, photos, and layout; Frankendork—free of murdering—as a rite of passage thanks to Kurt Morris, Mike Maguire, and Lauren Measure for the Liz Prince interview, photos, and layout; Yep, that John Felice, co-founder of *The Modern Lovers* in 1970, then *The Real Kids* in 1972 thanks to Ryan Leach, Lindsey Anderson, Lisa Merrill, and Becky Bennett for the interview, photos, and layout; Alligator pear, deep Grandma love, and the open proposal for dance cards at DIY punk shows thanks to Sean Arenas, Dani Kordani, Shelby Fujioka, Jonathan Velazquez, Becky Bennett, and Justin George for the *Delay* interview, transcription, photos, and layout; American Gothic in cherry print dresses thanks to Alice Bag, Angie Skull Garcia, Genesis Bautista, Andrew Wagher, and Becky Bennett for the *No Small Children* interview, transcription, photos, and layout.

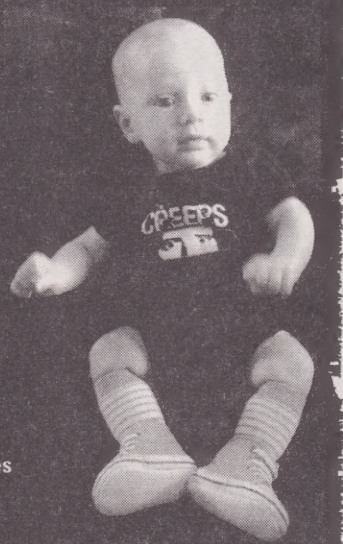
It's not a fetishizing of "archaic" media; it's recognizing that physical objects made of petroleum and paper often last longer than their host devices or invisible data "clouds." Thanks to #85's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Kayla Greet, Camille Reynolds, Indiana Laub, Craven Rock, Tim Brooks, Seth Swaaley, Sammy Thrashlife, Lisa Weiss, Keith Rosson, John Mule, Ryan Nichols, Mike Frame, Sal Lucci, Kurt Morris, Rich Cocksedge, Kelley O'Death, Art Ettinger, Chad Williams, Norb, Matt Average, Michael T. Fournier, Sean Arenas, MP Johnson, Steve Adamyk, Matt Werts, Juan Espinosa, Mark Twistworthy, Matt Seward, Jim Joyce, Dave Williams, Bryan Static, Garrett Barnwell, Sean Koepenick, Ashley Ravelo, Jimmy Alvarado, The Lord Kveldulf, Vincent, Chris L. Terry, Kevin Dunn, Jeff Fox, Tricia, Simon Sotelo, Billups Allen, and Robin Effup.

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for *Razorcake*. (razorcake.org/contact-us)



Ottawa running deep!

Joey Collister (l) listening to his first Ramones records ("I Wanna Be Sedated") and Nicke Williams (r) Creeps-ing out in his onesie. (Don't read the lyrics sheet quite yet, kid.)



VIVA LA SILENT ERA!



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WHITE NIGHT

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TOYS THAT KILL

Famby 42 LP/CD
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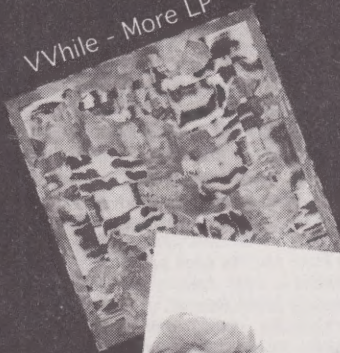
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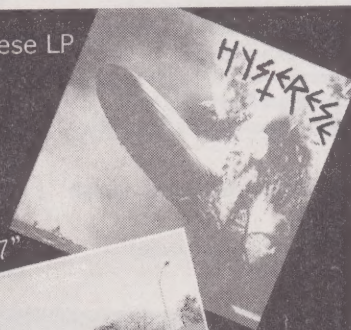
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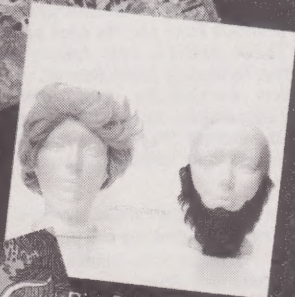
Hysterese - Hysterese LP



Iron Chic/Low Culture - Split 7"



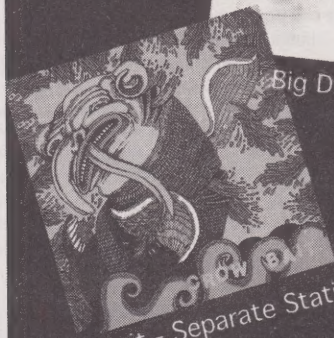
Big Dick - Disappointment LP



Catholic Guilt - Catholic Guilt 12"



Crow Bait - Separate Stations 7"



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RAZORCAKE

Issue #85 April / May 2015

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This issue of Razorcake is dedicated to the Schrecengost kids and their beautiful mother... Sophie, Jesse, Lydia, and Megan. Your Dada loves you even more than conversion vans!

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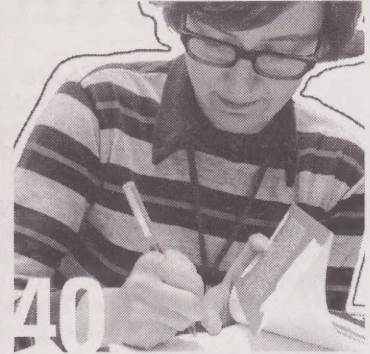
The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:

Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Steve Couch, Chris Baxter, Mary Clare Stevens, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Seth Swaaley, Justin George, Marty Ploy, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Heroes of Cosplay" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Andrew Wagher, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Yvonne Drazan, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Chris Popus, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Nighthawk, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Nation of Amanda, Eric Baskauskas, Vee Liu, Bianca, Russ Van Cleave, Samantha Mc Bride, Christine Arguello, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Adam Perry, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Ollie Miske, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Brooke Mccarley, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Javier Cabral, David Crimaldi, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnne Galletta, John Mule, Chris L. Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Jeff Fox, and Kelly Lone.

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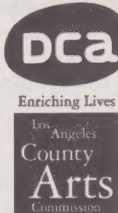


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A MONKEY TO RIDE THE DOG

SEAN CARSWELL

"I know that time wins all wars in this world, but we can steal little victories now and then."

Ridiculous Kid Shit

Lately, I've been introduced to what it feels like to be old. I have to sleep with my arm just right or I wake up in pain. I'm having a hard time lifting things. It takes me two hands to lift a pitcher of tea. Cracking the ice in ice trays has become a complicated ordeal involving me trapping the bottom of the tray between my hip and the countertop. Sometimes I'll turn the knob on the stove or try to unlock a deadbolt and find myself in excruciating pain. I wince when people want to shake my hand.

I sometimes have to ask my wife to open jars for me.

The Oblivians are helping me through it. I know that time wins all wars in this world, but we can steal little victories now and then. I feel like the latest Oblivians album, *Desperation*, is one of those victories. It's as loud and fuzzy as their early stuff was. They're still singing about ridiculous kid shit like spending four days in a drunk tank or being a pinball king. That's what I relate to first.

Not that I've been playing a lot of pinball or ending up in the hoosegow lately, but I have been doing some ridiculous shit myself. To even talk about it, I have to admit that I lied right in these pages.

Back in issue #50 of *Razorcake*, I talked about giving up skateboarding, about recognizing that my friends and I were all getting injured and we were probably too old to fall on concrete anymore. And I believed what I was saying at the time. The thing was, I wrote that column from Indiana, Pennsylvania, when I was spending my summers there going to school. I didn't have a skateboard with me. I thought I was done with it.

I was not.

Nearly six years after writing that column, I'll admit that I've been skating the whole time. I try to keep my age in mind when I do it. I pad up. I go to reasonable skate parks and spend most of my time in bowls, turning away when I get to the coping, keeping at least one wheel on concrete at all times. It's a little less fun than really pushing myself, but a whole lot more fun than not going skating at all. And it's kept me injury-free.

Then I moved to this neighborhood with some serious hills.

The song that first hooked me on *Desperation* is "Call the Police." Whoever's singing—I think it's Eric Oblivian, but

I'm not sure—starts the song, "I'm a heel-clipping, beer-drinking, zydeco lover, bring it on." Something about that wild guitar and hopping drumbeat and those lyrics make me move my body. It's punk rock that demands you dance. A rare song, indeed.

The lyrics are just about a house party. People come by. Music plays. Folks get drunk. A ruckus ensues. All good stuff. The party is very specific to the bayou area of New Orleans. Where else do you have "Mamma and Poppa in the kitchen fixing up another batch of wine"? Where else would people proudly sing, "I'm a floor-jumping, pole-bumping, booty-shaking lover, make it swing"? Where else do you have punk rock zydeco?

It's a boastful song, the kind of song that comes from knowing yourself, knowing what you love, and loving doing it. I think this is why the Oblivians were able to do something that so many reunited bands from the nineties haven't been able to do: make a good album in the 2010s. *Desperation* sounds like an album made by people who know where they are as musicians, who have grown since their glory years, who are willing to add new ingredients to the old gumbo, and who are dirty enough at the core to keep that old punk rock fire burning. So the album isn't just a rehash of nineties Oblivians. It's not a total departure, either. It's right where it should be.

Knowing yourself like this is tough when you get older. You have to take harder looks into the mirror. You have to acknowledge things that you maybe don't want to acknowledge. Here's what I should have acknowledged when I moved to a hilly neighborhood: I tend to take things too far.

I picked my first hill carefully. It was steep. It was serious. But at the bottom, I could make a right hand turn and go uphill enough to slow myself. I tried it on my old, flat, wide, eighties deck with soft wheels. About halfway down, I started to get the wobbles. I carved up enough to slow myself, and ran the rest of the way out of the bad situation. "Leave the hill alone," I told myself.

I did not listen.

I took a long board to the hill. That worked. The space between the trucks was enough to abate the wobbles. I could bomb just this one hill pretty safely. Good fun.

For a couple of years, I limited myself to this hill and comfortable trips to the skate park. More or less. I took on one challenge

in the neighborhood. Everywhere two streets intersect in my neighborhood, there is a concrete rain gutter. In the middle of it is a channel about three inches wide and a couple of inches deep. This carries water downhill. You can skate over this channel, but you have to hit it fast and at just the right angle. If you go slow, you go flying off your board. If you go fast and take the wrong angle, you go flying off your board even faster. If you go fast and just right, you got it made. You can connect a couple of hills and streets and bomb more of the neighborhood. It's not as safe, but it's more fun. So I started doing this a little. Or, well, maybe a lot.

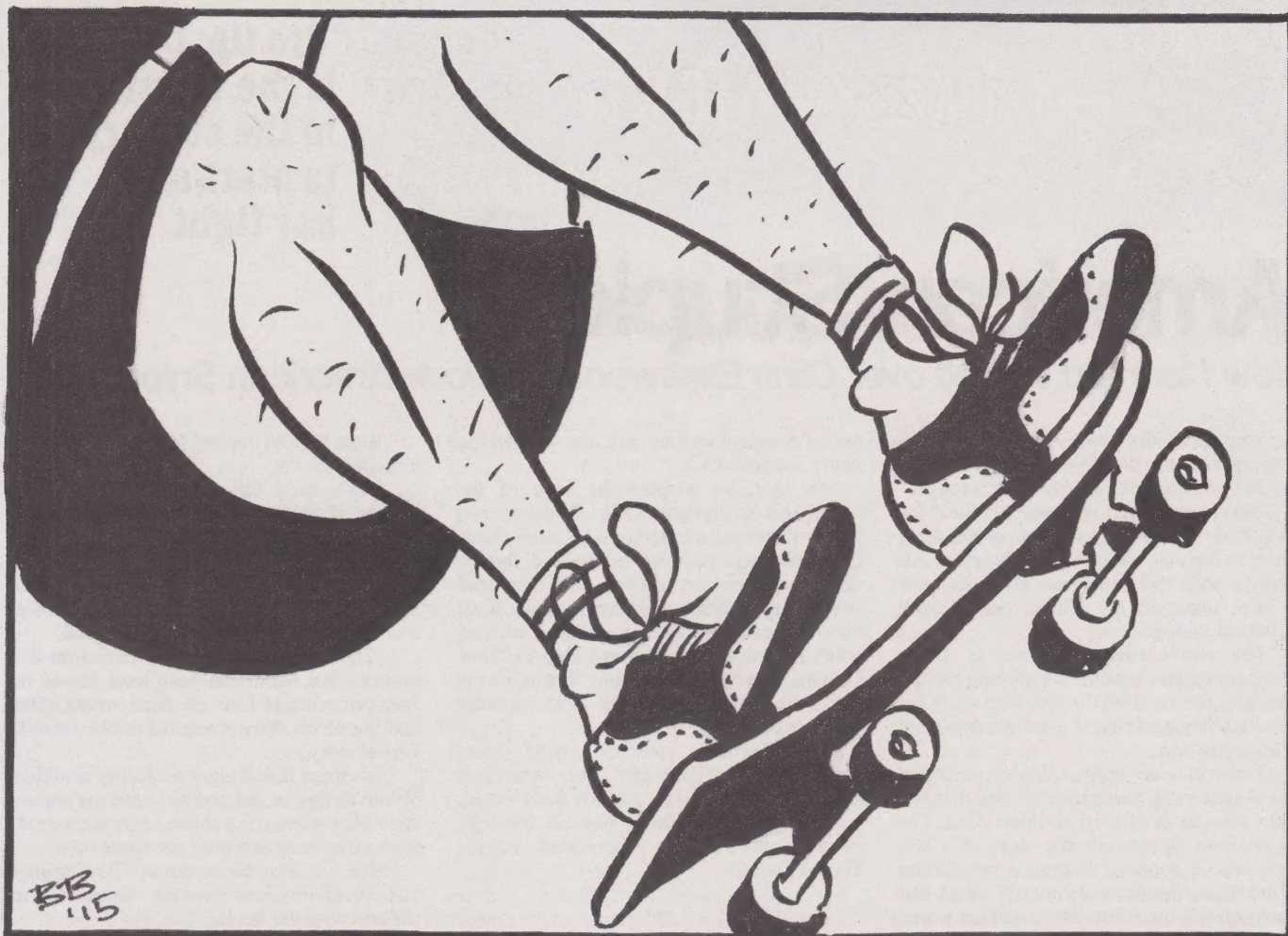
Halfway through side two of *Desperation*, the Oblivians sing the song "Oblivion." It was an inevitable title, I guess, something to let all those grammar nazis know they do know their band name is misspelled. It's the most Oblivians-sounding song on the album. Not exactly like something from the nineties, but like something from the nineties in the 2010s. It's kind of like those movies that are set twenty years in the past and look more like our memories of that time than they do like movies made twenty years ago. If the lyrics mean something, I don't know what it is. Just that her hair was black, her skin was cold, I stared at her, and all alone she cried, "Oblivion."

I don't need to understand it for it to be powerful.

After a couple of years of modest hill bombing, I decided that I could ride an old school short board around the hills in my neighborhood. I just had to take the right lines. And I needed better equipment. I could do it with inverted kingpin trucks. They don't wobble as much. So when Felizon asked me what I wanted for Christmas, I said, "How about a new skateboard?"

I picked out all the right pieces from a local skate shop, had them assemble it and put it in a box. Felizon paid and wrapped it up. On Christmas, I got a new skateboard. Hooray.

The funniest thing about it is, my design worked. I could get more speed than with my long board. The trucks absorbed the wheel wobbles. The shorter board allowed me to half-ass ollie over the rain channels. I could piece together three or four different hills and go fast. I mean really fast. Faster than I can run. About as fast as I can ride a bike. So fast that, if something got in front of me and



BRAD BESHAW

The biggest lesson I've learned is just that I need to get better at my power slides.

we collided, an ambulance would need to swing by to resolve the situation.

You know that feeling when you're doing something and you're barely skillful enough to pull it off and it's so dangerous and so stupid and so fun that your veins fill with adrenaline and your heart flutters like a hummingbird and you know what it means to be alive in this moment?

That's what it felt like.

So I bombed those hills. I did it again and again and again. For the four days after Christmas, it seemed like it was all I did.

Until, on the fourth day, I got too much speed and caught my wheel on a crack in the pavement and broke my elbow.

Now, even little things like typing this column hurt.

Greg Cartwright from the Oblivians makes more age appropriate music with The Reigning Sound. It's slower, tinged with some of sounds of seventies music that I

grew up with, and more introspective. I dig it. Their newest album, *Shattered*, is great. It probably has the more appropriate title for this column. But as my elbow heals, I need the Oblivians' hard-driving, booty-shaking, noisy garage rock to get me through.

I'm getting a lot of shit for being forty-four years old and breaking bones skateboarding. The typical assumption is that I don't know how to skate and I broke it trying to learn. When I try to correct people and explain what I really did, that tends to make matters worse, not better. I keep getting told I'm too old for this.

I'm not buying the criticism. I think it's better to be my age and bombing hills and skating bowls and staying in shape to skate than it is to be like a lot of the mid-forties people around me, slowly dying of a fatty-food diet and sitting in front of Facebook. They're all grumbling about bad joints and high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. I don't have to deal with any of that shit. The

worst thing in my world is that, sometimes, elbows break. This may mean a month of pain, but it's not the end of the world.

My takeaway from the whole experience is not that I need to stop skating. No way. I can't wait to bomb that hill again. I'll be healed up and doing it by the time you read this column. The biggest lesson I've learned is just that I need to get better at my power slides. Maybe I should wear wrist guards, too.

I think Greg Cartwright has my back. On the first song on *Desperation*, he sings, "There ain't no way to know how life will treat you, so let's rock and roll as we get old. We will before too long."

I keep playing and playing and playing that song.

—Sean Carswell



LAZY MICK

JIM RULAND

“Pro tip: Coronado is the worst place in the country to start a bar fight.”

American Stupid

How I learned to get over Clint Eastwood and love American Sniper

You probably have opinions about *American Sniper*, but if you haven't seen the movie those opinions are probably wrong.

American Sniper is based on the *New York Times* best-selling memoir of the same name written by Chris Kyle, a Navy SEAL credited with 165 confirmed kills, the most by any sniper in the United States' long history of violence.

The movie, despite numerous Oscar nominations, has become a lightning rod for criticism, mostly from the left, who vilify the film as a hagiography of a troubled symbol of an unjust war.

The critics are correct. It was an unjust war waged on a foundation of lies that left many thousands of Iraqi civilians dead. The movie does whitewash the story of Chris Kyle whose book is, at best, a celebration of the “God, family, and country” ethos that many Americans subscribe to and, at worst, the racist screed of a liar and a killer.

Nevertheless, this is a movie that all Americans need to see.

I was watching football with my daughter when I saw a trailer for *American Sniper*. It was the second anniversary of the murders at Sandy Hook Elementary that claimed the life of my friends' daughter Avielle. And here was Bradley Cooper on the television screen pointing a weapon at children.

I was furious. I couldn't believe it never occurred to anyone at Warner Brothers or the NFL that images of a man in military gear taking aim at children with a high-powered weapon might be inappropriate, if not grossly offensive, to the families of the twenty-six teachers and students who were murdered in Newtown.

And then there's the book. *American Sniper* is an artlessly executed memoir co-written by Chris Kyle, Scott McEwan, and Jim Defelice that has all the finesse of an interview transcript. From the outset, Kyle exemplifies a casual disregard for his victims. He refers to Iraqis as “Hajis” and “savages,” makes all kinds of unjustifiable claims (like finding WMDs) and invents stories, such as his claim that he killed a pair of carjackers in Texas and punched out Jesse Ventura at a bar in Coronado. (Ventura won his defamation lawsuit against Kyle

and Texas authorities say the carjacking never happened.)

In Iraq, he adopted the logo of the comic book vigilante The Punisher and boldly displayed a tattoo of a crusader cross. Stateside, he gives lip service to God, family, and government but seems mostly interested in drinking, fighting, and shooting guns. Kyle also bragged about other killings, such as when he purportedly climbed atop the New Orleans Superdome and shot looters in the aftermath of Katrina, which most certainly didn't happen.

Why would someone with more confirmed kills than any other American sniper feel the need to pad his body count, and not just with military exploits but with extra-judicial killings committed in the United States?

I wanted to like the book. As a Navy veteran and the son of a naval officer who served on a Swift Boat in Vietnam, I have nothing but respect for the most elite fighting unit in the armed forces. Hell, I was conceived in San Diego while my father was stationed at Naval Base Coronado, which is also home to four SEAL teams and the six-month BUD/S training course.

As a recovering alcoholic, I have a great deal of empathy for people with substance abuse issues, especially military personnel. I didn't go to a rehab facility or detox ward; I went to recovery meetings. My favorite is on Coronado Island at 5:30 AM on Saturday mornings. It's always full of drunken sailors—my kind of people. I can't talk about what is shared in those rooms, but I hear all kinds of stories from all kinds of sailors, from guys who used to push a mop around to former SEALs.

(Pro tip: Coronado is the worst place in the country to start a bar fight.)

I came away from the book with an uncharitable view of Chris Kyle as an arrogant, unlikable jerk who turned his status as an elite killer into a best-selling book written for an uncritical audience of NRA enthusiasts and Second Amendment evangelists who subscribe to Kyle's narrow view of the world.

What if I told you my father wasn't really a Swift Boat vet?

I bet you'd feel betrayed. I bet you'd wonder if all the other things I've told you are true. You'd think, “If he lied about one thing, what else is he lying about?”

That's the problem with Chris Kyle. He lied to his wife and he lied to his friends. He lied on the radio and he lied in his book.

(Those who attack Kyle's critics on the grounds that only those who have served in Iraq can criticize him are dead wrong. The man made his life a matter of public record. End of story.)

I suspect that Kyle was deeply troubled by the things he did and saw, but the stakes are higher when you publish a true account of your experience and put your name on it.

One lie introduces doubt. Two brings your credibility into question. Three casts a shadow over the book.

In other words, on the subject of Chris Kyle, Kyle is demonstrably untrustworthy.

I didn't want to see the movie, but was developing all kinds of opinions about it that were shaped by the things I was reading. Idiots on Twitter. Kneejerk responses from the left and right. Misguided think pieces. What was particularly appalling to me were the articles written by those who hadn't bothered to read the book.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, there's a saying for this: prejudice prior to investigation. It pertains to the many beliefs an alcoholic will cling to, typically in the early stages of recovery, without fully examining if those beliefs are true.

I am pro veteran but anti war. I support gun control and abhor gun violence, but I love war movies and first person shooter games like *Medal of Honor*.

I decided to embrace my contradictions, clear my mind of biases, and go see the fucking movie.

I'm really glad I did.

Clint Eastwood's handling of Chris Kyle's character, played by Bradley Cooper, is fascinating. He takes Kyle's black-and-white worldview and turns it into a straightjacket.



JACKIE RUSTED

American Sniper is a deeply sad movie.

When Kyle arrives in Iraq, he meets Biggles, who is reading *The Punisher*. Kyle berates him for reading a comic book. Biggles replies that it's not a comic but a graphic novel; there's a difference. It's a funny, throwaway line but it demonstrates the limitations of Kyle's philosophy. For Kyle, a book with pictures is *always* going to be a comic.

Civilians think of soldiers as being unstintingly gung-ho. That's not the case. Part of learning how to be a soldier, sailor, airman, or marine is letting go of whatever preconceived notions you brought to the enterprise. In the movie, Kyle can't do that. He is so good at what he does that everyone treats him like a hero, which makes him uncomfortable. He embraces the platitudes as a way of being like the rest of the guys. The rest of the guys, however, change. They lose their innocence, become cynical, freak out. There's a fantastic scene where Kyle's brother experiences all three of these emotions in less than a minute.

Kyle's brother, a marine, is leaving Iraq just as Kyle returns. Kyle's brother has seen too much. The platitudes aren't working anymore. He leaves Kyle with a defiant, "Fuck this place" and leaves.

The genius of *Pulp Fiction* is that it shows a heavyweight boxer (Bruce Willis) and a hired killer (John Travolta) interacting one way with tough guys and a completely different way with the women they are attracted to.

American Sniper captures the peculiar nature of the American invasion of Iraq

where combatants cycled on and off the battlefield for multiple tours. This presents an opportunity for Eastwood to show Kyle both in country and at home with his wife Taya, played by Sienna Miller.

In Iraq, Kyle is cool under fire. At home, it's a different story. He doesn't know how to deal with the stressors of being a husband and a father. At one point, Taya turns to him and says, "I need you to be human again."

Again and again, Kyle defends his combat record by saying that he shot his targets in order to protect Marines and fellow SEALs. Whether you're a sailor on liberty in San Diego or a combat Marine in Fallujah, you want your brothers and sisters in arms to have your back no matter what.

The trouble is that's not what the armed forces are for. Military personnel are dispatched to do a job and complete a mission. The safety and wellbeing of the personnel is secondary to the job. (Something that law enforcement seems to have forgotten.)

Our government does not hesitate to put the men and women of the armed forces in harm's way to achieve its objectives, that's why servicemen have to be able to depend on each other. The need is real.

That doesn't change the fact that the safety and wellbeing of our servicemen and women are secondary to the needs of the command under which they serve. That's a fact.

That's why parents should not let their sons and daughters join the military. That is my opinion.

While *American Sniper* is a brilliant character study, it's a flawed war movie that relies on tired formulas and hokey clichés. Eastwood invents a Syrian sniper who serves as Kyle's nemesis. Mustafa is a narrative device used to link Kyle's four tours together. Without Mustafa the movie is a chaotic jumble of confusing combat scenes where it's never entirely clear who the enemy is or why they are fighting—i.e. the way it was for the hundreds of thousands of U.S. combatants in Iraq.

The remarkable thing about *American Sniper* is that takes an exceptional warrior and turns him into an everyman. Most military personnel have never looked through the scope of a sniper rifle and sighted on a target, but a great many people who have fought overseas have experienced the things that Chris Kyle's character experiences when he comes home, and it's all up there on the screen for us to see and learn from.

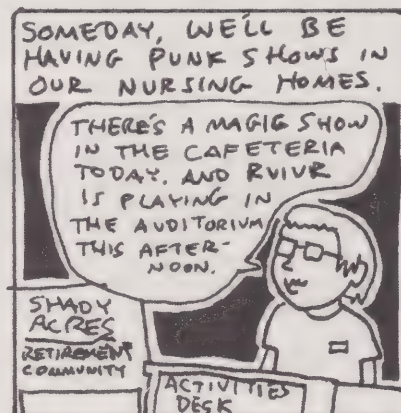
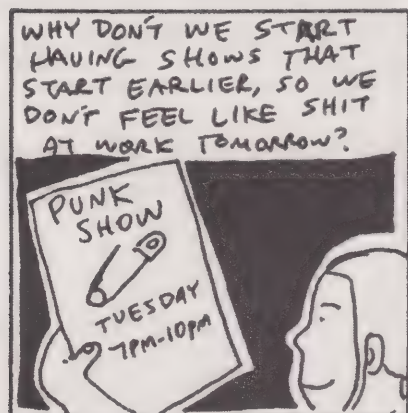
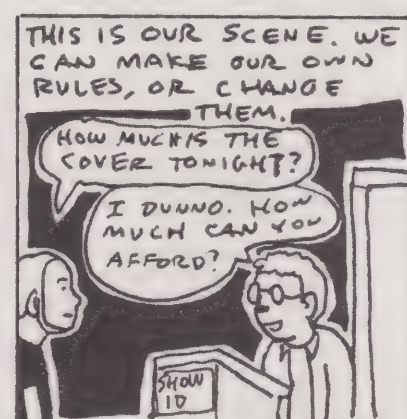
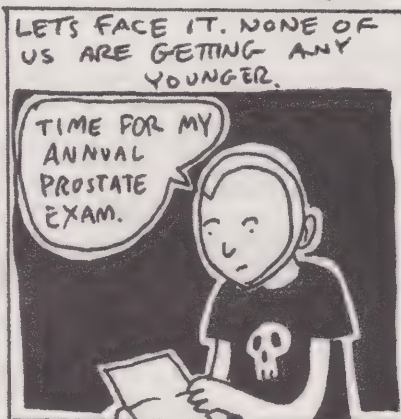
American Sniper is a deeply sad movie. Only the most hard-hearted and inflexible ideologue could see it as anything but an anti-war film. If anything, it serves as a reminder that the human cost of our involvement in Iraq is going to be with us for a long, long time.

—Jim Ruland



RAZORBACK 09

MY SIXTY-MINTH (HAAA) COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT





Shanty Cheryl's Photo Page

The Spits at Mr. T's Bowl, Highland Park, California

HERE COMES SUCCESS!

CASSIE J. SNEIDER

"The tent stayed up
in the backyard for
two more weeks, a
red monument to
our shame."

Five Hundred Miles

I gave up on eating meat when I was eleven. This decision came after stumbling upon some books in the children's section of our local library which showed the bloody step-by-step process of animals being knocked out and plucked, sad rows of hanging ribcages, and textbook photos of 1970s farmers looking a little too pleased with themselves. In hindsight, these books were probably PETA propaganda literature placed there by an excited vegan teenager. But they were enough to move me to announce to my family that I was becoming a vegetarian.

The revelation that I should stop eating meat came at a tough time for me emotionally, because I had recently perfected a system for the best possible hotdog. My technique began by first slicing a hotdog down the middle to insert an orange happy trail of Kraft singles, then layering briny canned vegetables, onions heavy with corn syrup, and an amount of ketchup that was in no way safe for human consumption.

Meat was gross to me anyway, and I usually ate cereal at dinnertime, or hamburger buns dipped in mayonnaise. But bologna and hotdogs were two of my favorite foods. Their status as meat seemed more like a philosophical question than anything, a technicality one could argue and win. I decided to keep eating them until I knew the time was right for me to give them up, which as it turned out was for the best.

"Scuze me, miss. Is your mommy or daddy home?"

The man who had rung our doorbell was missing a canine tooth, and his stained white T-shirt and cobra-length blonde rattail hung loosely over his sunken, depleted frame. He had parked an unusual-looking pickup truck at the bottom of our driveway, unusual because the bed of the truck contained many coolers bungeed into place.

"Uh...I'll go see." I was no fool when it came to stranger danger. *America's Most Wanted* would run mugshots of real crazies and axe murderers after the dramatic reenactments. My spidey-senses were tingling. Something wasn't right.

I closed the front door, locked it, and went into the living room to get my parents. In the summertime, my stepfather kept the air conditioner cranked to about sixty degrees, or twenty if you made the mistake of standing near the blast of frozen air in a wet bathing suit. It was a meat-locker cold that everyone else seemed to get used to, shivering under many layers of itchy crocheted afghans just to watch

a Blockbuster rental of *Total Recall* in the living room. "Ma, some guy is at the door."

My mother was in her spot on the couch, the one where if either my sister or I sat in it, she would make a dismissing, "Fssssht!" sound and wave her hand, and we instinctively knew to scamper to the loveseat or to our rooms. My mother's spot on the couch was a sacred place, bearing the faintest of imprints from years of her small, bird-like body sitting cross-legged in the same position. There were light burn-holes from cigarette ashes falling in the wind-tunnel created by the air conditioner, piles of coupons, and a silver dusting made by revealing the losing numbers on Lucky 7s, Loose Change, or BINGO scratch-off tickets.

"What'd ya tell him?" she asked, resetting the cigarette timer.

My parents had decided to try to quit smoking when they saw a device advertised on the Home Shopping Network that looked like a promotional calculator you could get from a life insurance company. It was a timer that beeped at different intervals when it was time for a cigarette, and after a series of weeks, the beeps would grow further and further apart until the user was cured of their need to smoke. My parents instead took to staring at the timer in those last desperate moments before it went off, tense and edgy, waiting for the beep to tell them they could smoke again.

I shifted my feet, moving out of the range of the freon tornado.

"I dunno. I didn't say anything. He seemed weird."

My stepfather, Artie, had been asleep this whole time, snoring soundly, but he gasped from sleep apnea and bolted awake.

"Wha? Huh? Someone at the door?"

"Some guy," I reported. "He's got a weird truck."

Artie folded the recliner on the easy chair and stood up.

He wasn't wearing a shirt or shoes, just hospital scrub pants, which had become an around-the-house uniform. This started several years before when Artie flipped his Camaro into a watery ditch and his clothes had to be cut off his body. The hospital sent him home in green scrubs, which he wore every day until they became threadbare and eventually got a hole in the butt, at which point, my mother went to the nurse uniform store and bought him three more sets of scrubs.

He walked to the front door and my mother followed him. I followed her, because somebody had to be the one to call 911 if things got weird. When they opened the door, the man was leaning against the railing, pupils fully dilated, staring into the white-hot July sun.

"Sir. Ma'am. I am running a special on filet mignon, \$9.99 a steak. I also got spareribs, \$9.99 a rack and you trust me when I tell you that they are the most succulent ribs you will ever put your mouth on."

Artie squinted. He looked at my mom. "You got cash?"

She nodded.

"Okay. We'll take a look," Artie said.

The meth head walked to the pick-up and started prying open coolers. He talked about different cuts of meat, and my parents tried to respond in thoughtful, knowledgeable ways that confused me. Most of the meals my mother prepared involved reheating fish sticks or taking the parchment paper off of store-bought hamburger patties. Maybe my parents had been yearning for different kinds of meat all along, but now, with a pickup truck full of options, their eyes were opened to all the possibilities of the universe.

During this whole transaction, my younger sister Carly, was surprisingly absent. Interactions with strangers were so rare at our house, that even my parents buying twenty-dollars of questionable meat off of a drug addict was a thrill. I wondered where she was, but the thought was gone once my stepdad was shaking the boney hand of the meat salesman and my mom was holding two long shrink-wrapped racks of pork ribs.

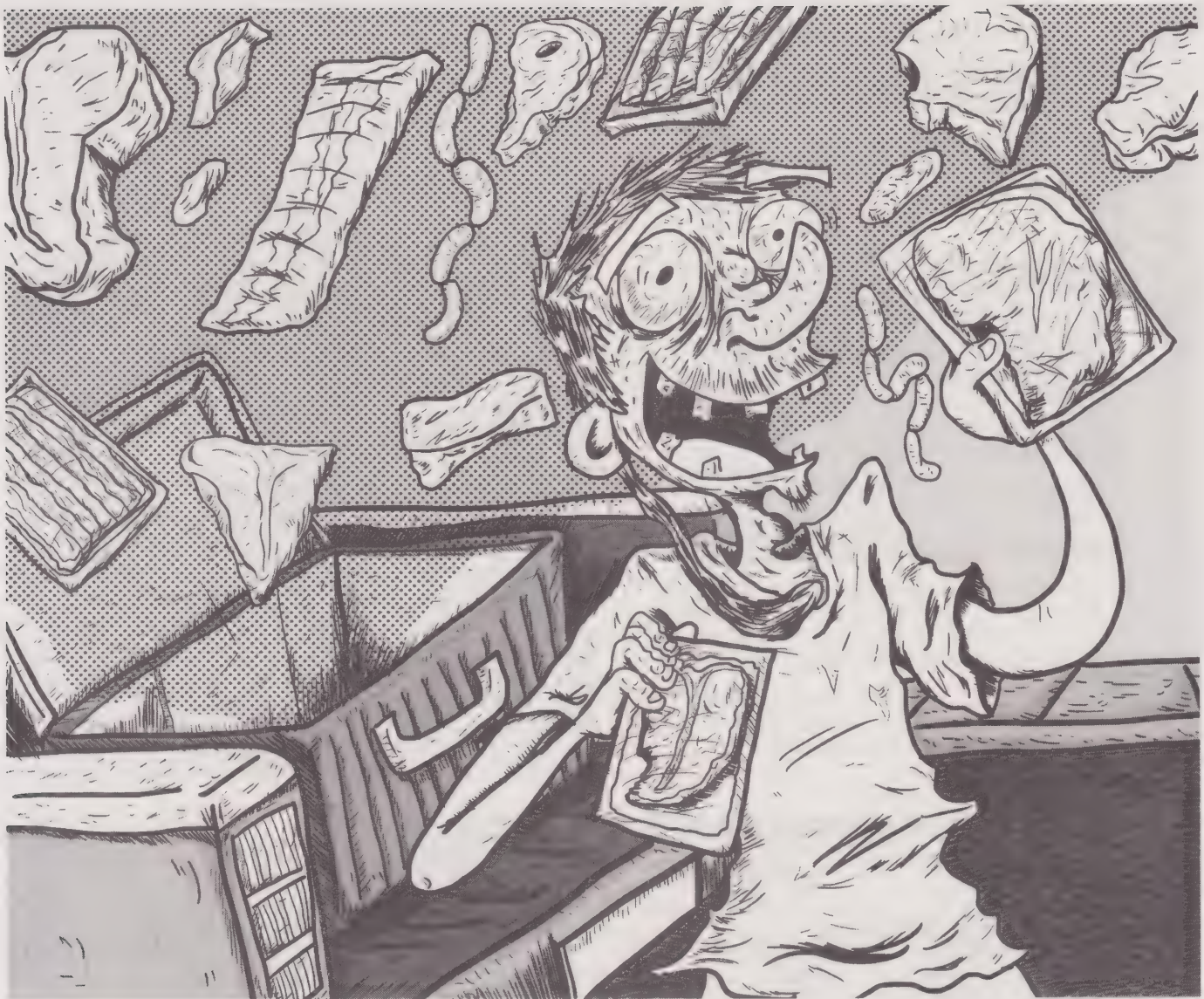
Artie adjusted the drawstring on his scrubs. "Let's get these on the grill."

**

Carly opened the sliding glass door leading to the patio, struggling with the broken track as my mother was setting out paper plates and Artie was lighting the grill.

"Are we gonna do the tent tonight?" she asked, barefoot and wearing a shirt with a thugged-out Tweety Bird that was so long it looked like she wasn't wearing pants.

My eyes lit up. In all the excitement of buying shoplifted meat, I had forgotten about the tent. My parents had been saving up the UPCs on their cigarettes for the last two years. We had gotten several T-shirts, bandannas, and beach towels, but the thing me and Carly



STEVE THUESON

The revelation that I should stop eating meat came at a tough time for me emotionally, because I had recently perfected a system for the best possible hotdog.

really wanted was the tent. In the Marlboro Miles catalogue, a small red tent was pitched on the outer rim of a canyon. A cowboy was leaning his hat back, smoking a cigarette against a piece of driftwood. It was the most romantic stock image I had ever seen in my life: just a cowboy and his tent. I wanted to be that cowboy, even if I had to share the tent with my sister. Artie had even considered quitting smoking six months sooner, but we didn't have enough Marlboro Miles, so Carly and I begged for him to keep going.

The tent had arrived the afternoon before, but Artie was so tired and winded when he got home from work that he took off his steel-toed construction boots at the door, changed into his hospital scrubs, and fell asleep in the recliner in the direct arctic current of the

A/C. He had promised us earlier he would set up the tent, so I had already gone into the backyard to clean up any dog poop, rocks, or tennis balls in the most level area so that we would be ready when the time came.

Artie nodded and Carly disappeared into the house, reemerging with the giant sleeve that held the tent. We watched him as he unfolded the instructions and began assembling the plastic poles and tying zippered vinyl flaps over them. His breathing was labored but he got the job done and stopped only once when the alarm sounded that it was time for a cigarette break. The timer went off and both of my parents jumped in Pavlovian reflex, running into the living room and savoring every drag right down to the filter.

Shortly after the tent was assembled, the ribs were ready. We sat down under the patio umbrella, shielded from the sun. My parents and sister split the ribs into thirds and I ate a hotdog, cutting it open like a late-night television surgery to make room for plastic-wrapped layers of cheese and chemical-laden condiments.

"I thought you said you weren't eating meat anymore," Carly said, wiping barbecue sauce from her face with the outside of her forearm.

I felt defensive. "Hotdogs don't count."

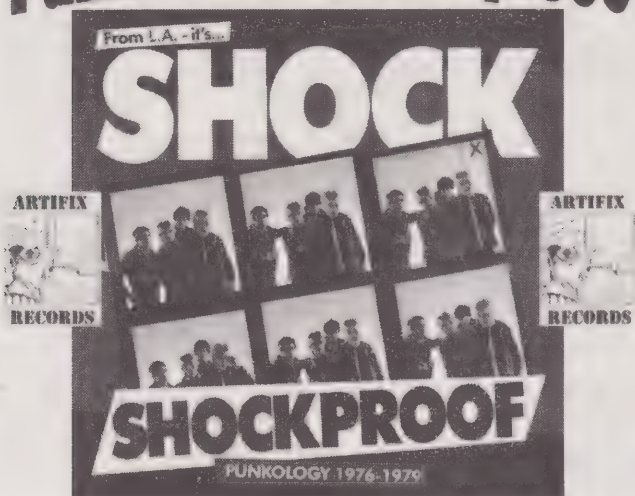
"She's right," Artie said. "It's not meat if it's made of buttholes."

Everyone else laughed.

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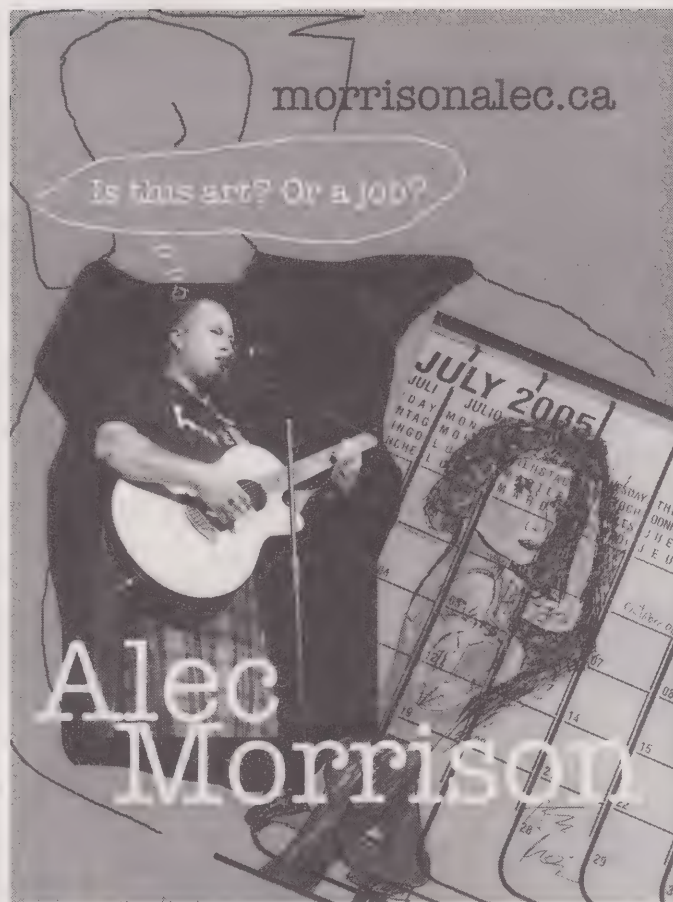
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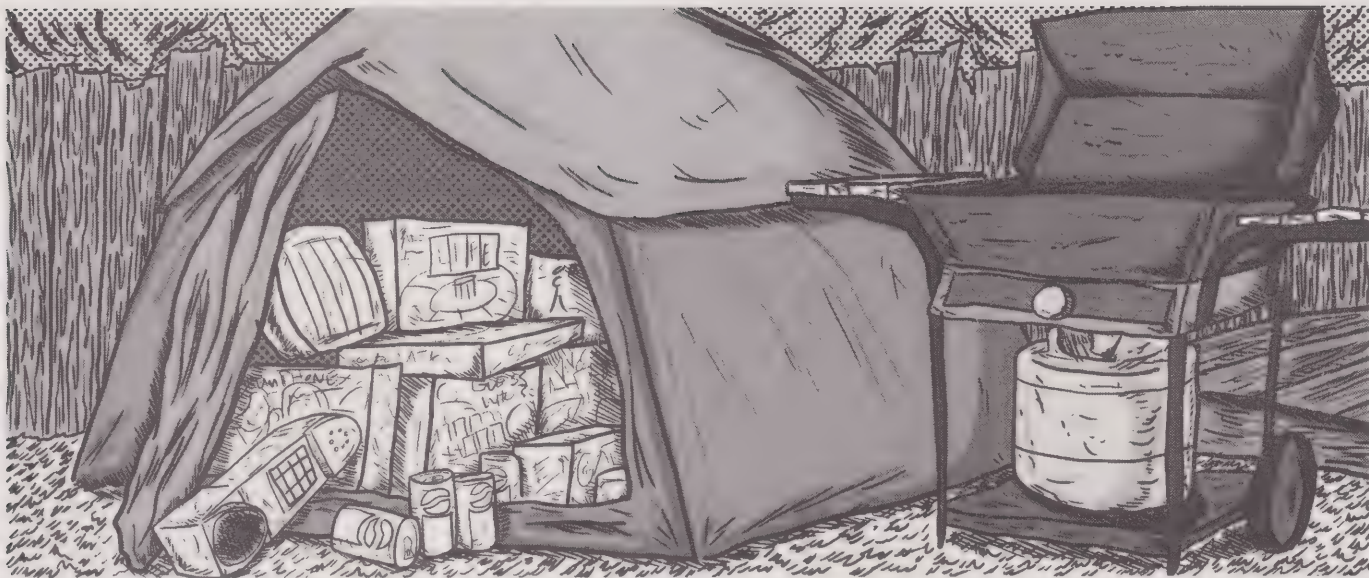
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STEVE THUESON

Artie flipped his Camaro into a watery ditch and his clothes had to be cut off his body. The hospital sent him home in green scrubs, which he wore every day until they became threadbare and eventually got a **hole in the butt.**

After dinner, Carly pulled me into her room. Apparently, when the rest of us were in the driveway looking at stolen groceries, Carly had been considering how we were going to spend our first night in the tent.

"What do we bring?" she asked, and I surveyed the piles of bedding and toys on her floor. We had been planning this for months: the journey of camping in our own backyard, approximately five feet from where the propane grill was emitting odorless, tasteless, poison gas.

I thought about it. "We're gonna need our sleeping bags. Probably some soda, too."

"What about games?" Carly asked, gesturing toward a pile of board games Jenga-ed near the foot of the bunk beds.

"Yeah," I said. "Those, too."

It took two hours for us to set up the tent. We dragged pillows and blankets and the big Marlboro flashlight that also had a compass and a radio and two smaller flashlights and some cans of Pepsi and a bag of popcorn and eight board games we used to make a wall down the middle. Though we got along usually, we were viciously territorial when it came to small spaces. There were moments when either of us would gladly have blinded or maimed the other in the back seat of our mother's car and not had a single remorseful thought about it. I went into a junk drawer and found some masking tape. By then, night had fallen.

"This is the line," I said, and Carly nodded. The line was for both of our safety and security. We respected the line when it was drawn, and we both acknowledged what horrors could befall us if one were to cross the line uninvited. We shook hands and then agreed to play Dream Phone, which lately had been our favorite

game. The goal of Dream Phone was to narrow down who has a crush on you by dialing phone numbers into the bright pink Dream Phone. The game came with twenty-four hunk cards, twenty of which were white dudes who looked like the poor man's version of New Kids On The Block members, one guy with a mullet in a windbreaker named Carlos, and three others who were seemingly harmless, yet ambiguously ethnic. The only card Carly and I never wanted to get was red-headed Paul, who looked like Eddie, my cousin's loser boyfriend who our whole family hated. Eddie was like the Beetlejuice of family functions because no one would even mention his name.

The best thing about Dream Phone was obviously the phone. When you dialed a 555 number, someone would answer and give you a clue, but the Dream Phone voice had the overly chipper tone of a thirty-year-old frustrated gay voiceover actor trying to sound like a straight Midwestern teenager. The Dream Phone man spoke in a taunting cadence, and most games would just result in Carly and I dialing 555 numbers at random and saying whatever insults we had recently learned from *Beavis and Butthead*, which we watched in secret at a low volume after our parents went to sleep.

"He'll eat almost anything, but not **HOTDOGS!**"

"You eat wieners!"

"He looks cool in whatever he wears. He's not wearing **GLASSES!**"

"You're a butthole and you **EAT** buttholes!"

Carly shuffled the hunk cards. I powered on the radio of the Marlboro flashlight, moving the small antennae to pick up a station. The only thing it got was the jazz

station from the high school down the block, so I shifted around my side of the tent, secretly hoping to pick up Aerosmith.

I don't know what happened. The only thing I can say for sure is that while shuffling cards and looking for a radio station, one of us crossed the masking tape line. I cannot say with confidence that it was my fault, or even that it was Carly's fault. If anyone or anything is to blame, then it is the fault of nature for making siblings as they are, for the simplest of things resulting in the biggest of fights, and for the natural competition for air that occurs when you are sharing a five-by-five cube of poly-vinyl space. What I do remember is Carly pulling my hair out at the temples, and I was trying to pull her hair harder and we were both screaming **LET GO NO YOU LET GO!** and then I finally let go and then she did and I ran out of the tent screaming, "**I'M TELLING!**" then the sight of my bare feet in the dark running up the stairs two at a time to frantically knock on my parent's door, then my mom answering in a bathrobe and hearing the words, "*That's it. The tent is over.*"

The tent stayed up in the backyard for two more weeks, a red monument to our shame. Until Artie took it down, I spent a lot of time in the front yard, roller skating in circles, looking out for the pickup truck full of stolen meat, avoiding the glaring reminder that Carly and I couldn't get along for longer than twenty minutes in an enclosed space. And when we finally did start talking again, it was to pick up the pink phone with the obnoxious voice, and call all the hunks except Paul until my mother said, "Girls, the hotdogs are ready."

—Cassie J. Sneider

AMERICAN GRILLED CHEESE REVIEW

"Undead Kennedys"

LET THEM EAT JELLYBEANS (AND/OR PUSSY))

Like most right-thinking, hard-working, god-fearing Americans, I was SHOCKED when I saw those photos of the recent Dead Kennedys show where the couple performed the sex act onstage! I was *gobsmacked! Flabbergasted! At a loss!* I was thunderstruck! Speechless! Agape! Aghast! Astonished! Buffaloed! Confounded! Staggered! Taken the fuck aback! I SIMPLY COULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT MY EYES WERE TELLING ME. I'm not talking about the photos of the couple themselves, mind you—those were just a bunch of blocky distorto-pixels, like when Ric Flair brought the WCW® Championship Belt on WWF® TV shows ((although it did appear that the young lady in question had a nice abdomen, for whatever that's worth. Then again, so does a wasp, or is that a thorax? Man, I love me some choice thorax. But I digress)). The pictures of the actual sex act weren't all that mind-blowing, I'm talking about the photos of the gig itself, ergo and to wit: HOW THE FUCK DO THE DEAD KENNEDYS DRAW THAT MANY PEOPLE WITHOUT JELLO™??? Like, who the fuck is even their singer now? Eddie Munster? The kid from *Lost in Space*? Mikey from the Life® cereal commercial? Going to see the Dead Kennedys without Jello is like going to see ALL without... uh... well, okay, the simile kinda breaks down at that point, but you know what I'm saying! That's like going to see Simon & Garfunkel without Simon, right? You've bought a ticket for a night of pure, unadulterated Garfunkel! Well, I don't know about you, but I can't take a night of pure, unadulterated Garfunkel, and it sure the hell doesn't inspire me to new heights of cunnilingual spontaneity ((Well, wait a minute. Garfunkel sang all the harmonies, and I'm kind of historically queer for harmony vocals, since I generally find them an utter impossibility to sing, myself, so maybe a night of pure, unadulterated Garfunkel WILL inspire me to new heights of cunnilingual spontaneity! This new wrinkle in the age-old dilemma of "does prolonged Art Garfunkel exposure cause defensive indifference at third base amongst the youth of today?" needs to be field-tested ASAP! Take a seat, young lady, and remove your jeans whilst I put on the *Bookends* album [[side two only; side one is too creepy]] and every time Paul Simon sings you put your hands over your ears and go L A L A L A really loudly. We'll get to the bottom of this in jig-time!))! But, I mean, fuck! There

were TONS of people at this place, for a band that hasn't recorded new material in, what, thirty years? ((Okay, I just looked it up. It's been twenty-nine years since the last Dead Kennedys album, not thirty. I was close. Then again, if you don't count *Bedtime for Democracy*, my calculations are right on the nuts, and it's not that taxing of a mental exercise to pretend that album never happened, ya know?)) were. It was like Macauley Culkin, Eddie Munster, and Emmanuel Lewis or something like that. The precise details elude me. Yet still, there they are, the Undead Kennedys, packin' 'em in on a Thursday night! Good for them, I suppose, but, yet, the cynical and self-righteous punk rocker in me still wants to know HOW THE FUCK ARE THEY DOING THIS? Why are people coming to see this? How is this interesting?? What joy are people deriving from coming to see a Jello™-less Dead Kennedys play songs that are old enough to be President ((and then, presumably, got shot in the head during a Dallas motorcade))??? ((okay, I will admit that I have seen the Comets, minus Bill Haley [[an understandable no-show, having been dead since 1981]], and they were great. And, come to think of it, I also saw '70s glam kingpins Sweet, minus lead vocalist Brian Connolly, in about 1991, who were also great. [[Sweet played the best encore of all time: They came back on stage, and asked the audience what we wanted to hear. To a man, we screamed "BALLROOM BLITZ!!!" Not-Brian-Connolly politely informed us they'd played that one already. To a man, we screamed "BALLROOM BLITZ!!!" They obliged. Not-Brian-Connolly then asked what else we wanted to hear. To a man, we screamed—you guessed it—"BALLROOM BLITZ!!!" This time, Not-Brian-Connolly simply shrugged and said "very well," the band launched into "Ballroom Blitz" for the third time that evening, and that concluded their encore. It was electric, and frantically hectic. However, then the band started leaving, 'cause they all stopped breathing. You take the good with the bad I guess]] And I do cop to seeing the Undertones some years back, less one Feargal Sharkey, who were similarly great. This would tend to render my position logically indefensible. Ah well, that's never stopped me before, we'll carry on)). So, yes: Ignoring the parenthetical remarks immediately previous, I must restate my core query here: WHY ARE PEOPLE COMING TO SEE

WHAT PASSES FOR THE DEAD KENNEDYS THESE DAYS, A FRONTMAN-DRIVEN BAND WHO ARE CURRENTLY LACKING SAID FRONTMAN, AND HAVEN'T RELEASED A NEW RECORD IN ALMOST THREE DECADES??? I guess the answer is obvious: They're clearly coming for the pussy eating. Well, maybe that's, you know, the new thing, right? Dumber things than onstage pussy eating have caught on at shows! Circle pits, chicken skanking, vegan spaghetti! *Human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria*, the list goes on!!! Why NOT pussy eating? It could be like bobblehead night at baseball games! Look how that's helped attendance, fans snap up tickets in droves for games in which they'd otherwise have scant interest, just so they can come home with some googly-headed trinket that looks marginally like Norichka Aoki or Jonathan Lucroy! I assure you that *this* strapping green-blooded American lad would *gladly* take a few minutes of pussy eating over the receipt of some googly-headed trinket that looks marginally like Norichka Aoki or Jonathan Lucroy, and they don't even give away Norichka Aoki bobbleheads at punk shows anyway, so it's a damn non-issue!! We need to get the butts back in the bleachers at punk shows ((metaphorical bleachers; real butts))! We need *excitement! Danger!! Action!!! DROOLING!!!* After over a decade of insanity, gas prices are finally kind of normal again! The schmuck in the street can once again afford to fill a crappy van full of gas and bugger off for parts unknown, playing songs of great impermanence for bemused locals and impressionable youngsters from coast to coast and border to border! *The table is suddenly set for a potential Punk Rock Re-Resurgence! Now who's taking their pants off???* Make no mistake about it; public cunnilingus ((not to be confused with Public Cunnilingus, which should already be a band name, and, if it's not, what the fuck is wrong with you kids anyway?)) is the most critical component of marketing punk rock to the next generation of punkoids-to-be, without whom our T-shirt sales surely cannot help but fail to spike. *Public cunnilingus is the straw that stirs the drink! The Alpha and Omega! The truth, the light, and the way!* Public cunnilingus will be the new pogoing, the new slam dancing, the new punk rock dance step that nobody taught the cop from *ChiPs!* The "Mystery Dance" of song and story, lain bare



MARCOS SIREF

why are people coming to see this? How is this interesting?? what joy are people deriving from coming to see a Jello™-less Dead Kennedys play songs that are old enough to be President?

to promote commerce and proper dental hygiene! Now, I know what you're saying: *Gosh, Rev. Nørb, couldn't we just have onstage blowjobs be the next big thing? After all, there IS historical precedent for same ((cf. Batons v. Female Fan's Mouth, CBGB)), and, you know... BLOWJOBS, right?* No. Not at all. Blowjobs are right out. First off, blowjobs are too metal. Second off, if you get a blowjob on stage, what, exactly, are you gonna do? Exactly, you're gonna make a series of funny faces. You're gonna mug it up and point and wildly gesticulate and pantomime shock and roll your eyes around and look all intentionally goofy, and play the whole thing up for laughs. Then, two hours later, the person who gave you the blowjob is gonna be like *I GOT ON STAGE AND GAVE YOU HEAD IN FRONT OF THE ENTIRE AUDIENCE AND ALL YOU DID WAS MAKE FUNNY FACES AND WAVE YOUR ARMS AROUND LIKE AN APOPLECTIC TOUCAN!!! WHAT OTHER GIRL IS GONNA ((etc. etc. etc.)),* you know the drill, you'll never get out of the doghouse because you did not appear properly appreciative. Further, no other girl is going to come within forty feet of you for the next twenty years, because

they will be "disgusted" that you could "sink so low" as to have such an act perpetrated upon your person ((implied but not stated: "without even asking me if I wanted to do it")) ((further implied but not stated: "which I TOTALLY DIDN'T!")). Plus, if punk shows start being known for dispensing onstage blowjobs, who's that gonna attract? That's right! Guys looking for blowjobs! Those tend not to be in short supply at punk shows! If punk shows start garnering a reputation for wild outbursts of quality cunnilingus, whom does THAT attract? ((pause for you to do the math)) *The math, Egbert! The math!* The onstage blowjob is fool's gold! Mine it not! Onstage cunnilingus is totally the way of the future, which, itself, requires a few concessions from the Rock Establishment: First off, we need some fuckin' stages again. Fuck playing on the floor! Fuck standing on a chair! We need some super kick-ass stages on which to play punk rock again, because getting your pussy eaten on the VFW floor is just fucking TAWDRY. *Have some decorum, woman! Show some class, gents!* People are gonna wind up with styrofoam packing peanuts in their cooch and the accumulated filth of a

generation adhered to their backsides! Public cunnilingus should be reserved for nice high stages, with kick-ass monitors. Punk stages are ALWAYS clean and orderly! They smell of lilac and fresh linen! Ask around! Also, when people take pictures of this stuff, there can't be any of those stupid distorto-pixels involved, censor bars, or anything of the sort! It's bad for T-shirt sales! *The line on the graph's getting low and we can't have that! PUBLIC CUNNILINGUS, COUPLED WITH FALLING GAS PRICES, ARE GOING TO PUT PUNK ROCK BACK ON THE TOP OF THE SHITHEAP, WHERE WE BELONG, FOR YEARS TO COME!!!* To this end, I'd like to thank the nameless couple who got the ball rolling at that Undead Kennedys show last month. I'm not sure what possessed that dude to go down on his lady friend on stage like that, but I'd be remiss in my duties if I didn't proffer a guess that it was because he was—you guessed it—"Too Drunk to Fuck." *Carry on, Spike.*

Love
-Nørb

I'M AGAINST IT

DESIGNATED DATE

"The Eagles' *Hotel California* is no where near as evil as that entire band is lame."

Evangelical Worm Food

For the last fourteen years (Happy fucking birthday to us!) this magazine has been published, we've been a bonafide 501(c)(3) non-profit organization close to ten of those years. According to the Internal Revenue Service, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is "an organization that must not be organized or operated for the benefit of private interests, and no part of a section 501(c)(3) organization's net earnings may inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual." Basically, this means that not a single magazine affiliate personally benefits financially from any monies or donations that Razorcake acquires. Any and all financial gain is used to keep the magazine and all its associated vital parts on track.

Now, for some reason or another, there are a few people I've talked with over the past years who've seemed to get a weird connotation in their heads that Todd and Daryl (our editors/tireless ringleaders extraordinaire) are milking the udders dry from the cash cow that is punk rock with an ever-ongoing magazine that has yet to miss one single publishing deadline. After explaining a quick gist of the nuts and bolts of how things operate to these few people, the distorted visions of any magazine contributor wiping their asses with savings bonds or honking fat rails of blow off of the coffee table 24/7 at Razorcake HQ is quickly put to pasture. Todd has emphatically stated from the beginning that the books are public record, but I think that anyone who's really seen what this magazine's all about first-hand won't even have a reason to do so.

This brings me to the part of my story about the *other* type of non-profits.

And I use the term "non-profit" here as loosely as can be when it comes to the following organization.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, I had a friend named Carl in elementary school whose mother was a heavy-duty Christian. She was a pretty cool lady, but hanging out at their pad was often a weird experience for me, as she was a big advocate of organic eating and cooking, the kind of super-health conscious trip I wasn't used to. Food habits aside, what was unnatural to me there was the constant programming on the only channel that they'd watch on the television: TBN, the Trinity Broadcasting Network on one of the UHF channels (remember those?).

The only break I got from that network would be when Carl and I went on an Atari

2600 bender that monopolized the use of the television set, but other than that, the screen would be flickering with the likes of apparent do-gooders, spreading the word while fleeing its TV flock with its permanent donation phone number displayed at the bottom of the screen. I can still picture that number display in my head like it was yesterday, with Pastor Paul Crouch and his ridiculously hair pieced wife Jan, whose wacky wigs would even make Dolly Parton laugh out loud. We're talkin' television evangelism and being saved at its travelling salesman best.

One of the times I stayed overnight there, I remember Carl's ma cutting short our Yars' Revenge marathon on the Atari, wanting to watch a TBN program about the evils of rock music, including backward masking on records. Looking back on this now, I'm guessing she probably wanted me to watch that program with them, knowing very well that I was a gun-toting soldier of the KISS Army, and was really starting to cut my teeth on the harder stuff at that time, like Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath. Funny thing is, Carl's older brother Chris, a partying rocker in his own right, had no interest in watching this particular program—or any others for that matter. Nonetheless, being the nice guest I was, I sat and watched one of the most entertaining programs about rock music that I had ever seen.

I clearly remember Flim-Flam Man, I mean, Pastor Paul and Jan hosting this show, along with some "expert" in the field of this devious, devil-may-care shenanigans rooted in the grooves of the vinyl, as well as in the imagery of the LP covers. The "expert" spouting off took the obvious pot shots at KISS, going on about how the Knights In Satan's Service (think about it, maaaaan) were going after the youth demographic with their evil messages of putting partying and sex first before anything else, including the wishes of their parents (isn't that another name for "rock'n'roll"?). They had a blood-spitting band member who called himself The Demon? *The Demon*?

Then came the pointing out of the underlying imagery associated with these devious Knights, like their LP cover which supposedly depicted a scene from Sodom and Gomorrah: the four band members tromping through the flaming wreckage of a city. Uh, that record was entitled *Destroyer*, and I don't think the image of four leather-clad dudes decked out in platforms and grease

paint chasing after butterflies with fucking butterfly nets would have set the visual tone for an album named *Destroyer*. Naturally, I started to get defensive, but soon started laughing to myself how ridiculous this was sounding: KISS, evil? Way off base, geniuses. You want evil? Go watch *The Exorcist*.

Oddly enough, the next album he went after was The Eagles' *Hotel California*, which, for the record, is no where near as evil as that entire band is lame (The Torrez can attest to this—refer to my column in issue #14). The "expert" goes on about how the song lyrics clearly depict the person in question is indeed in Hell, and points out on the gatefold picture that there is an ominous-looking face looking down off the balcony above the crowd of people below. These days, I tell people that it's the face of the then-young kid version of The Torrez, waiting for that perfect moment to shower the band below with his urine stream.

Other records they discussed the impurities of were: Black Sabbath's *Mob Rules* (the Devil's face...there he is!), Led Zeppelin's unnamed fourth LP (with "Stairway to Heaven"...oh, the hidden, ass-backwards horrors), The Stones' *Goat's Head Soup* (a goat's head! *Right there!*), and The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Satan's servants and death are all around us), along with some poking around at a grip of others. (NOTE: I just wanna say here that if anyone reading has any video links to these kinds of shows, please don't hesitate to shoot me an email. I've been scouring the internet trying to find this particular episode with no luck. Thanks!)

Now, I was never raised to take things at face value, especially if said things seemed a tad excessive on grasping at the truth of the matter at hand. And as entertaining as this program was for my own foolish reasons, it kind of struck me a few years later that people were literally opening up their wallets and calling in to this network because of what some carnival barkers using passages from the bible were doing for their own gains—and doing so for their own personal gains with a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, I might add.

Churches have been doing this for centuries, and the TV movers and shakers are some of the slickest cons you'll ever see bilk people's cash in the name of Jesus. Paul Crouch and his old lady Jan started up the TBN in the early '70s along with Jim and

TODD AND DARYL

And Their Friends



I don't think the image of four leather-clad dudes decked out in platforms and grease paint chasing after butterflies with fucking butterfly nets would have set the visual tone for an album named *Destroyer*.

Tammy Faye Bakker (you remember that pair, I'm sure), who soon split off to do their own gig. Team Crouch built their network into a multi-million dollar empire. They also owned and operated five other independent stations that each reach a different demographic of pockets to empty.

TBN is still the top leader of all the bleeders, reaching out to over 18,000 television and cable affiliates worldwide. So, when you have this much of a donation pipeline coming in globally, opening up a Christian-themed amusement park, purchasing his and hers mansions within the same few blocks of each other, and dropping

\$100,000 on a fucking air-conditioned mobile home solely for their two dogs isn't a problem. All with the 501(c)(3) non-profit status, naturally.

Crouch's two sons, Paul Jr. and Matthew, as well as a few other associated family members, have helped run the TBN machine for quite some time, but a couple of lawsuits amongst each other—as well as with a few past controversial employees—has done anything but help rise up the image of this particular den of thieves (which is a whole other column in itself). It makes my head spin how not a single one of this group ever got seriously pinched for some serious prison time. Yet.

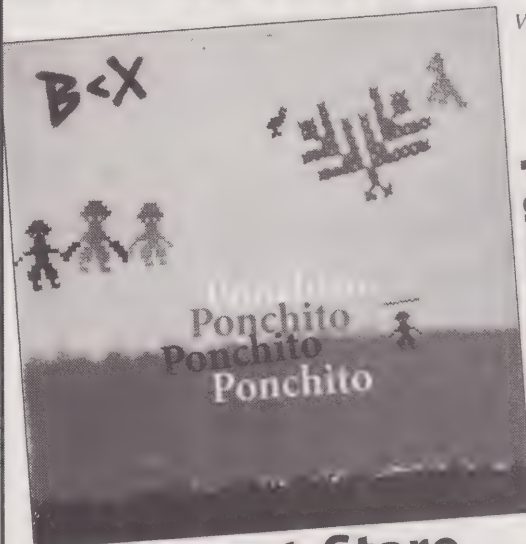
Quite some years back, Paul Crouch became known as a pioneer in what's called the "prosperity gospel," which basically says that God wanted his followers to be rich. Kinda goes against what you're preaching when you literally take what you want your people to have, isn't it, Crouchy? Doesn't matter now, anyway, seeing that you really can't take it with you when you die, just like you did a coupla years ago.

Rest in pieces, worm food.

I'm Against It,
—Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

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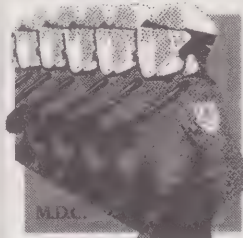
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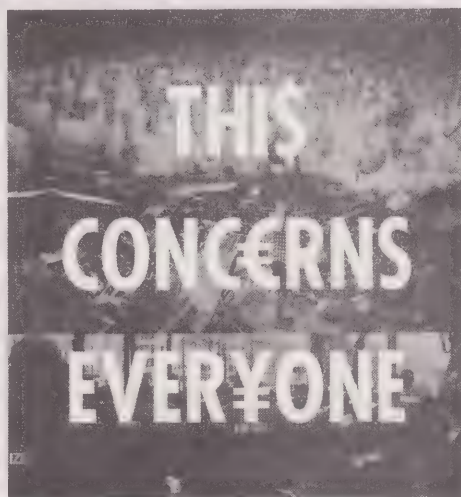
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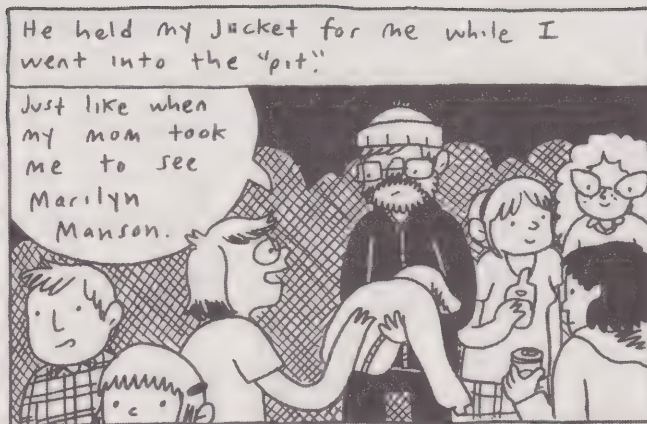
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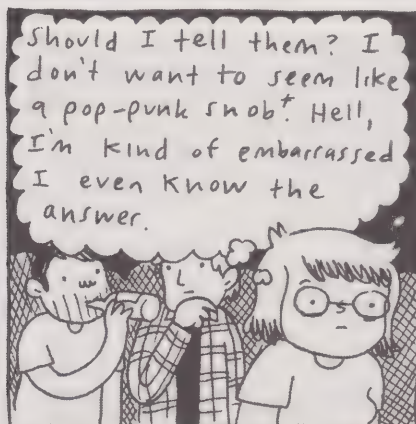
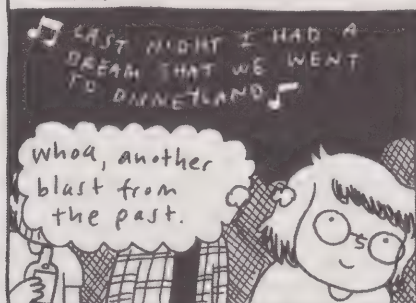


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I stood in the crowd by
myself, without my phone,
waiting for the band to
start.

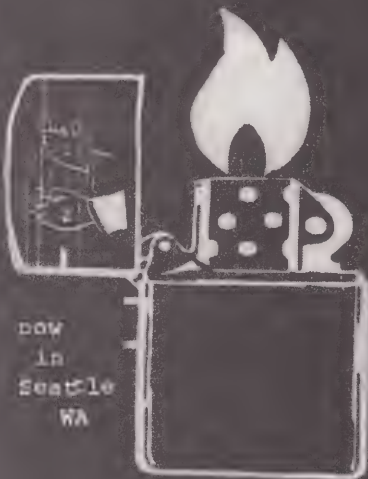


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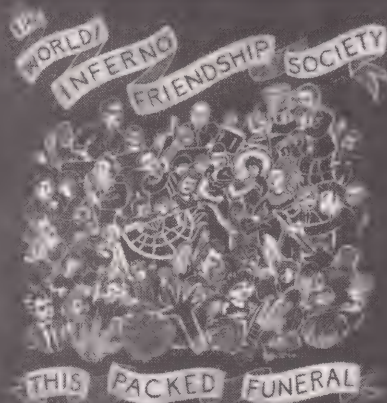
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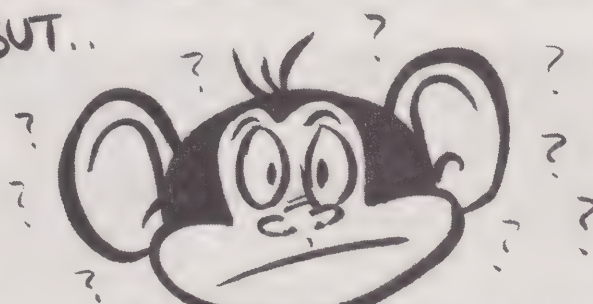
AS I GET OLDER, I CAN'T HELP BUT
REFLECT ON MY MORTALITY... DID
I DO EVERYTHING I WANTED? WILL
I HAVE ANY
REGRETS?



WILL TODAY BE THE DAY?
THINKING ABOUT THESE THINGS
IS KINDA TOUGH...



BUT..



THE MOST IMPORTANT THING I LEARNED..

IS THAT LIFE IS FOR LIVING!



SO..

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GET
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GODDAMME GODDAMME

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GOD DAMN, THAT DJ MADE MY DAY!!*

*PETER PIPER BY RUN-D.M.C.

SOMETIMES HE WINS SOMETIMES HE LOSES.

BUT HE'S NOT GIVING UP.

KN 2/15

THE DINGHOLE REPORTS

RHYTHM CHICKEN

**"This is
Wisconsin.
It's okay if
you're jealous."**

A Rugged Bunch: Chicken Eats Groundhog

I've been thinking a lot lately about how us Midwesterners are a sort of rugged bunch.

It was the mid-1800s when the Wisconsin backwoods started seeing a noticeable influx of European settlers. First they travelled across the Atlantic to a strange new world. Then they tried to escape the congestion of the original colonies and headed west into the wild unknown. Conditions were not ideal and life was rough. Winters did not make life any easier. Eventually, some of them found their way to Milwaukee, and then worked their way into the rural backwoods where land and a new life awaited them. Most of these pioneers lived short, difficult lives, but some passed on their rugged genes to the next generations. About one hundred and fifty years later, their descendants are shirtless and drunk at Lambeau Field while the ten-below-zero winds whip across the frozen tundra.

A few generations down the line, Wisconsin became the dairy state. Farm life was hard work. I didn't grow up on a farm, but both my parents did. From one generation to the next, families developed a good sense of hard work and inhuman endurance under less than optimal conditions. Brutal winters have only made our skin tougher and strengthened our determination.

Here we are in 2015. Most Wisconsinites have well-heated homes, high-tech insulated clothing, and modern warming devices of all kinds. Life is certainly not the survival challenge it was in the mid-1800s. On some days, the only exposure we have to the frigid elements is when we run from our heated home out to the warmed up car with heated seats. We get by just fine. Over the decades, however, there are still those who say, "Heck with this!" and move south to more forgiving climates. Once again, this leaves the more rugged individuals behind to pass on their tough-skinned genes to the next generation.

For many of us who chose to remain and face the annual three or four months of ten-below-zero, there are some days when we take comfort in the readily available climate-control. Other days, however, we feel the great inner calling to GET OUT THERE AND DO FUN, STUPID STUFF! For some it means going out on a frozen lake, drilling a hole in the ice, and throwing a line and hook down the hole hoping to catch a tiny fish. Then there's those who want to go skiing, snowshoeing, ice-skating, snowmobiling,

snow-biking, sledding, inner-tubing, or just make snow-angels in the yard. When it comes to grilling-out, no blizzard or deadly cold snap has ever deterred my father from sizzling up steaks and bratwurst out on the back deck, cocktail in hand.

Then there's New Year's Day. Many of us here in the Midwest are lucky enough to live near the Great Lakes, five very large and very cold bodies of water. It should only be expected that a certain percentage of us are going to jump into the open water, hung-over and screaming on New Year's Day. I've gone through this Wisconsinite rite of passage twice so far, and I'm sure some year soon there will be a third time. Why? Because Grandpa's looking down from up there and most of us are hard-wired for this sort of thing anyway.

Dinghole Report #146: Polar to Solar, Ruckus to Rock! (Rhythm Chicken sighting #694)

So my friends Bill and Dan down at Milwaukee's Rushmor Records, the same folks who sponsor this very chicken in their parade float every summer, also started hosting a polar bear plunge in Milwaukee's south side. The icy plunge was scheduled for noon. Then Dan's band, the Burning Sons, was to play at a nearby bar at 1 PM. Polar plunge, then the Burning Sons. Polar to Solar, get it? Anyway, the poster they made for the day's double event showed a large, bright polar bear with a red anarchy sign painted on its side. I was totally in.

My Hen and I were in town the night before to see Rev. Nørb And The Onions play at the Circle-A. Later, the Rhythm Chicken played at the stroke of midnight at the Vanguard, my friend's new sausage bar. At noon, exactly twelve hours later, My Hen and I found ourselves on the shore of Lake Michigan. There were a couple hundred participants up and down the beach, ready to take the plunge. The temps were in the teens and my frosty drumset was set up on the rocky beach, just a few feet from the windy shore. At exactly noon the plungers all screamed as they ran into the ice cold water, which was still over ten degrees warmer than the air.

I and my blue sparkly frosty kit supplied the thunderous rhythms for their near-frozen

plunge! My floppity ears pounded and swayed in the cold lake breeze as my frozen drumsticks struck the rigid skins. Some ran out immediately and warmed up with towels and dry clothes. Others swam around leisurely and later sauntered out to crack open a cool beer. (Note: In these conditions, a cool beer is kept in a beer "cooler" to keep it from freezing.) Lunacy was in the air, along with screams and a freezing mist from the crashing waves. All the while, my time-tested rhythms supplied the backbeat for their yearly ritual... but I decided to save my actual plunge 'til next year. Sorry, Grandpa.

My Hen and I packed up my icy kit and joined the wet and chilled crowd going to Frankie's Newport. There the Burning Sons were warming up the crowd with their blazing hardcore punk rock. Frankie's was *packed*. Everyone enjoyed great rock, hot food, and cold beer into the afternoon—another amazingly fun event thrown by the two good gentlemen at Rushmor Records. These two are definitely doing their part to keep the character and culture of Milwaukee's south side music scene alive and quirky. A Rhythm Chicken can only feel honored when they request his performance.

Dinghole Report #147: A Groundhog Day Parade..... 'nuff said. (Rhythm Chicken sighting #696)

Ellison Bay is a quiet little village about ten miles north of where I live now. If not kept in check, the winter blahs up there can potentially lead to cabin fever—or worse yet—(gasp!) moving to a warmer climate. (NOOOOO!!!) Five years ago, a few of the residents started organizing a new event which I can safely say is pure genius: the Ellison Bay Groundhog Day Parade. Does Ellison Bay have a groundhog to foretell the supposed onset of Spring? No. What Ellison Bay does have is a ten-minute parade that travels about two city blocks, from the bank to the bar. Like I said, pure genius.

Everyone in town takes the afternoon off and gathers along the main drag. Half the village is watching the parade while half the village is *in* the parade! Some of the floats and participants are decorated with a groundhog theme. Some are just goofy. Afterwards, in the village tavern, parade watchers and



KASIA ONISZCZUK

Note: In these conditions, a cool beer is kept in a beer “cooler” to keep it from freezing.

participants alike gulp down adult beverages with groundhog stew (which I think might have been beef and pork, but they insist it was groundhog!). This is Wisconsin. It's okay if you're jealous.

So this year my friend Josh arranged to have the Rhythm Chicken on his new “float.” He had just purchased a little Bobcat front-end loader and wanted to ride it through this most glamorous and prestigious parade! He constructed a wooden box-like crate to attach to the forklift and we painted chickens and carrots on the sides with the warning, “Beware! Radioactive Chicken!” Like I said, the winters are long and hard.

This morning the thermometer read five degrees. By parade time it was a balmy thirteen.

We rolled out of the bank parking lot and headed down the center of town. I began pounding and pounding through my first dead-of-winter parade. A few minutes in and I couldn't feel my fingers or thumbs. I was having difficulty holding onto the drumsticks, but gripped them with all my chicken strength! There were maybe eighty or a hundred people along the parade route, all bundled up in layers of winter garments. They cheered and laughed as my chicken ears danced to the chaotic rhythms. The wind ripped right down the parade route, but Josh and I forged on.

After about eight or ten minutes of frozen parade rock, we found ourselves in front of the Mink River Basin, the village tavern. The largest crowd was there on the porch to witness the finale of this most

grand event. Once in front of the cheerful crowd, Josh stopped the Bobcat and slowly raised my chicken stage with the forklift attachment! When I was raised to the highest point (about eight feet above the street) the deafening cheers echoed through the little village! Lunacy saves the day!

We joined everyone in the Mink for some groundhog stew and a tall, frosty beverage. I had a little trouble holding my bowl of stew with no feeling in my fingers. Later the feeling slowly came back and my fingers burned while my thumbs felt like they were both slammed in a car door. I smiled and gulped down a chunk of “groundhog meat.” Days like this, I know I am exactly where I belong.

—Rhythm Chicken

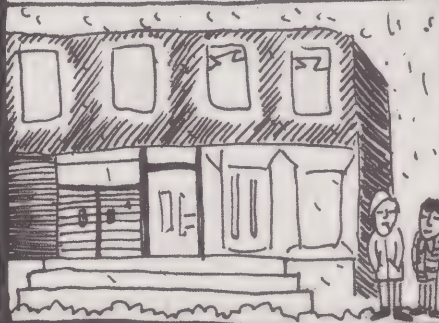
BITE
THE
CACTUS
AT THE

FUTURE COLLECTIVE

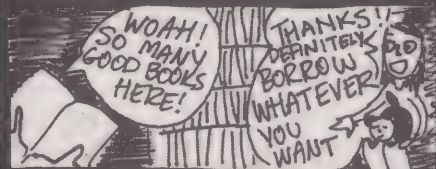
(BRATTLEBORO, VT)

BY
ADRIANCHI

VERMONT... JANUARY

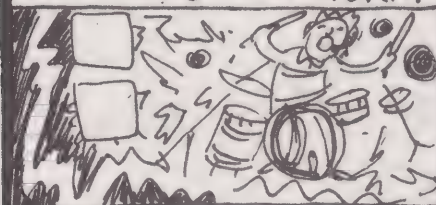


WE GOT THE CHANCE TO HANG OUT
AND MAKE FOOD WITH SOME
FUTURE COLLECTIVE FRIENDS...



SO MANY INSPIRING
CONVERSATIONS ABOUT REAL
SHIT, AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

IF NOT I THAN WHO THEN
A LOCAL PSYCHE LEGEND
DRUMMING UP A STORM



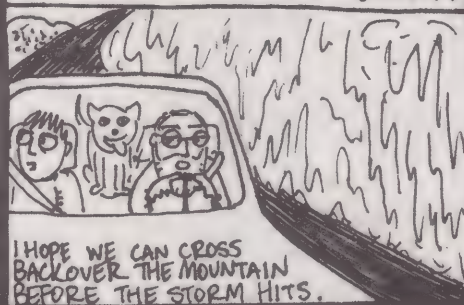
AND ARTEFULLY LOOPING VOCALS
IN A SUPER COOL COSTUME!!!

ALTHOUGH NO BAND HAD THE
SAME SET UP AS THE NEXT...



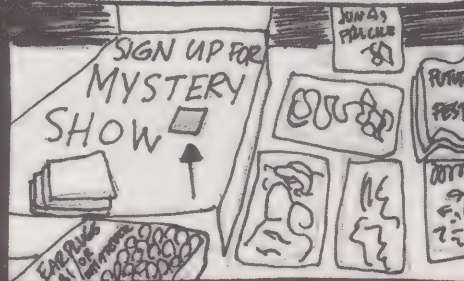
WE STILL SHARED EQUIPMENT!!!

WE HAD A 4-BAND SHOW, AND
A SNOWSTORM HEADED OUR WAY.



I HOPE WE CAN CROSS
BACK OVER THE MOUNTAIN
BEFORE THE STORM HITS.

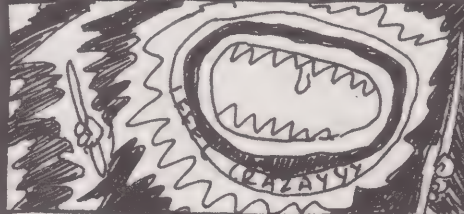
WHEN YOU WALK INTO THE FUTURE
SPACE, YOU'RE GREETED BY A FREE
ZINE/POSTER TABLE WITH...



THEN WE PLAYED -DARYL ON A
BORROWED LEFTY GUITAR, AND ME
WITH JAZZ STICKS I GOT IN Q.C.
THAT I BROKE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.



ALTHOUGH MOST OF THE PEOPLE
THERE WERE STRANGERS TO ME...



ALL THE PERFORMANCES WERE SO
BEUTALLY HONEST THAT I FELT OK
BEING MY SUPER INNER WEIRDO SELF.

THE ONLY SHOW OF OUR 9-DAY
TRIP VISITING FAMILY+FRIENDS

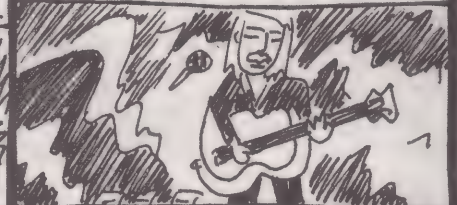


WE MOSTLY WENT SLEDDING.

bad weather friend OPENED
WITH GLORIOUS SOUNDS AND
SUPER INTENSE LYRICS



AARON DEMUTH CLOSED WITH
HIS SPOOKY/SPACEY COUNTRY
GUITAR SONGS...



AND TRIPPY, TRANSFORMATIVE
LIGHT SHOW PROJECTIONS.

THE WHOLE SHEBANG MADE ME FEEL
LIKE THE POSSIBILITIES FOR CREATIVE
OUTLETS COULD BE LIMITLESS.



THANK YOU FUTURE SEE YOU SOON



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- Written recollections from X themselves



Fire of Love

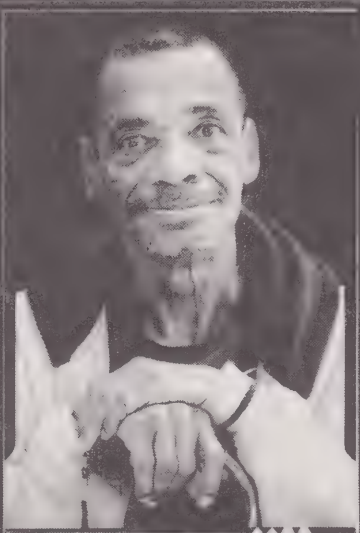
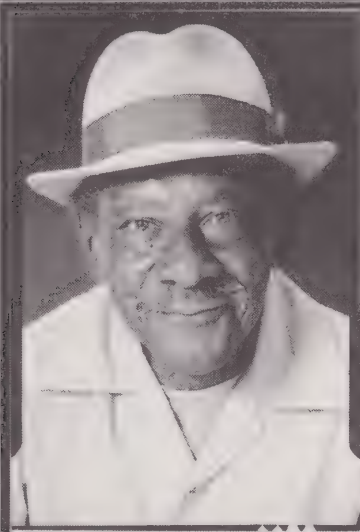
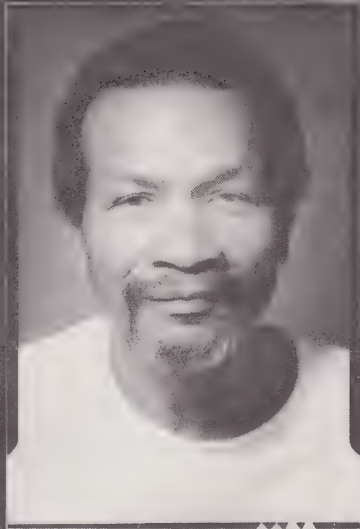
The Gun Club

"The crowd looking rock & roll didn't, looking like a crowd as soon as they speak, breaking off into the whirled of a storm that is as big, so black, and so awful and dense, I didn't see anything but its power."

- Thom Jurek, All Music

Porterhouse


-SURVIVORS OF SKID ROW-



Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page



We have all seen the edge, know how easy it would be to fall, and how hard it is to get up. These are faces from the endless number of those who have spent years battling homelessness on the streets of L.A.'s Skid Row. With the aid of SRO housing—who launched a project to change the perception of who the faces of homelessness truly are—these people are now home again. These are our faces—familiar faces—just as those in our very own families.



**QUARTERS AREN'T JUST
NECESSARY FOR LAUNDRY,
BUSSES, OR PARKING
METERS ANYMORE.**

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO PINBALL

BY KAYLA GREET

PHOTOS BY GENE HWANG
LAYOUT BY ERIC BASKAUSKAS

Most people I play pinball with have childhood memories of being placed on a step stool and flipping to their heart's content. My frame of reference is different.

While I'm sure my younger self had more than a few attempts at slaying the silver ball, my serious relationship with pinball began in 2008. That was the year I quit my job to travel the U.S. by train for two months, and when I got back my boyfriend and roommates at the time had discovered pinball. In less than sixty days they had become completely obsessed with it and scoured every bowling alley, laundromat, movie theater, and bar in a twenty-five mile radius to compile a list of "pins" in Tacoma, Wash.

We quickly discovered Shorty's and *Skill Shot*, both located in Seattle. Shorty's is a Coney Island-themed bar with sixteen pins, while *Skill Shot* is a DIY pinball zine which keeps a list of pins in Seattle much like the one we put together for Tacoma.

Within six months of moving to the Emerald City, I found a full-time job at Full Tilt (a pinball and ice cream bar), became a member of the Seattle Pinball League, and joined the staff of *Skill Shot* as a writer and editor.

My friend Tim Tournay puts it best: "Before I joined the pinball league I was a normal person. I had non-pinball friends, went to non-pinball bars, and participated in non-pinball activities. All of that has changed now." The same adage holds true for me—many of my decisions on bars or restaurants I go to are driven by whether or not they have pinball.

Fast forward to today. I'm still living in Seattle, where pinball is absolutely thriving. We have a pinball museum, casual tournaments six days a week, two Seattle leagues, and a total of 424 machines across 119 locations in the metro area with even more spots in the works.

Many modern pinball machines have an attract mode that grab most people's attention with flashing lights, sounds, and colorful artwork. It's how they get their hooks in you. By the end of this guide you will understand why quarters aren't just necessary for laundry, busses, or parking meters anymore.

N.Y. POLICE
USED THE
WOODEN LEGS
TO MAKE 2,000
BILLY CLUBS
FOR LOCAL LAW
ENFORCEMENT

PINBALL'S HISTORY: MOB SHIT AND OUTLAWED

The basic concept of pinball was created in the 1700s in France with a wooden contraption filled with actual pins that a ball navigated through, called bagatelle. This same concept is also what inspired the pachinko machines in Japan.

It wasn't until 1947 that designer Steve Kordek invented flipper bats for the game. You hear that? Flippers have only been used for a mere sixty-seven years and pinball is over three centuries old!

At the height of pinball manufacturing in the early 1930s there were around 150 companies making pins, mostly in Chicago which became the hub of the game because of David Gottlieb. He was a traveling businessman based out of the Windy City, pushing his hugely successful game Baffle Ball. Meanwhile in California, Harry Williams was adding electricity to his pinball tables. Word of his advancement spread faster than the tables and soon they were being emulated in Chicago. Williams relocated there to keep up with the competition. With lumber, wire, and steel in abundance, plus ports in Lake Michigan and railroads, the games were manufactured easily and spread across the nation quickly. Fourteen manufacturers remained by the mid-1930s, with companies like Gottlieb, Bally, Williams, Data East, and Stern leading the pack.

Pinball dominated in most American cities as well as in Japan with Sega and Data East. However, some spots like New York and L.A. decided to ban pinball in the '40s because it was seen as an illegal gambling opportunity. New York's mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia, and police went so far as to raid the city for thousands of pins, took sledgehammers to the machines and dumped them in the Hudson river. That is some serious mob shit right there. They also used the wooden legs to make 2,000 billy clubs for local law enforcement.

Enter Roger Sharpe in 1976. Sharpe proved to a New York judge that pinball is primarily a game of skill with a small percentage of chance. Two machines were brought in so there was a back-up available if anything went wrong with the primary. New York officials got suspicious of the second table and brought it into play. On a pin that Sharpe had no experience on, he called his shot and executed it perfectly. This Hail Mary skill shot was essential in saving pinball. End of argument. Ban lifted!

L.A.'s ban was thrown out in 1974. However, the city of Oakland only legalized pinball this year after over eight decades! The law there was rarely, if ever, enforced

until 2014 when someone got pissed about a nearby pinball party disrupting their sleep. The city of Alameda, California still has a ban—this despite it being home to a fantastic, chronologically organized pinball museum.

OLD SCHOOL VS. NEW SCHOOL

Pinball continued to evolve from a basic game with pins, wood, and metal balls over the years.

Between 1933 and 1977, the type of tables available to play were electro-mechanical (EM), meaning they operated on scoring wheels and relays. These tables have bells, clicks, chimes, and buzzers as the sensory experience and play at a much slower pace. There are generally only targets, spinners, and saucers (a recessed circle that usually increases your bonus when the ball falls into it. Once your score collects, it is kicked out of the saucer). Despite these older machines' simpler appearance, they usually are some of the hardest to master. Thus, there is a small schism between those who love the classics versus players who stick to modern games, though its best to build skills on both.

Post-1977 machines began using solid-state (SS) electronics consisting of transistors, circuit boards, CPUs, and audio boards, many of which are completely controlled by software. Scores are recorded on a plasma screen and, depending on the era of machine, you'll have either an alpha-numeric display capable of letters and numbers only, or a dot-matrix display (DMD) complete with animations and cut scenes. DMDs, on the whole, are orange, though a select few have been modified to be in full color!

Animations on the display give the player a better idea of what the game's goals are and is more immersed in the table's theme. Licensed games like Indiana Jones, Batman: The Dark Knight, and Tron include detailed likenesses of the characters and sometimes clips from the respective movies.

In 1999 Williams released Star Wars: Episode I and Revenge from Mars (a sequel to the wildly popular Attack from Mars) via an innovated concept called Pinball 2000. These tables projected a screen directly onto the playfield in an attempt to merge fans of both pinball and arcade games. Williams hoped their exclusivity with the Star Wars project would be very successful. It completely backfired. Obtaining this license was coupled with a sequester, or gag order, from Lucas Ranch which made the design process less communal. The Williams team was only allowed to discuss the project with a handful of people. Also, Jar Jar Binks—possibly the most hated Star Wars character—is a large part of the game. The pin was released at the same time as the movie. This endeavor sadly bombed and drove Williams/Bally out of business as well as mirrored the subsequent downfall of pinball in general.

This left Stern Industries the monopoly of pinball manufacturing for over a decade up until today.

Jersey Jack Pinball popped up last year with its Wizard of Oz table decked in LED lights and an LCD plasma display that caught many player's attentions. They plan on releasing *The Hobbit* next. A company in the Netherlands called Dutch Pinball is releasing *The Big Lebowski* pinball and gaining a ton of buzz about it. Spooky Pinball is another new pinball outfit and has released an original game called *America's Most Haunted*. I've been lucky enough to play it twice and it's really awesome.

GETTING SERIOUS

Interest in pinball and match play is erupting like crazy in Seattle.

A few months ago we adopted a team play model from New York, which engaged eighty people in a weekly league. Every Monday night, two teams meet up for match play at one of the six bars hosting games.

Pinball Seattle is much like a bowling or dart league where teams pick their strongest players, best machines, and battle each other.

Four rounds of matches (two singles—solo, head-to-head play, and two doubles—cooperative combined scores between the

two teams) are played, points are assigned, and one team goes home a winner. This formula is repeated over eight weeks until top teams emerge for the playoffs and finals.

Before the start of this bar league, there was and still are very standard "three strikes you're out" tournaments that occur weekly, monthly, and annually. Turnouts at these events can be anywhere from fifteen to hundreds of people, based on the frequency and prizes. In Seattle even our Wednesday Flip Off at Add-A-Ball is averaging thirty-five players a week and has a record attendance of forty-seven! I lovingly began to equate these to punk shows.

Weekly pin tournaments are much like the five dollar show your buddy's band plays on off nights at the local bar. You see the same familiar faces from the community out, having a few rounds after work and singing along to the same tunes that your friends penned week in, week out.

Monthly tournaments are the active touring band of the circuit. Many of the weekly crowd will make it out along with the occasional friends who dropped out of the crew of regulars. These folks still love the community and the scene, but have cut back on going out, save for the handful of times something dear to them comes to town and they're willing to shell out ten bucks for it.

Annual tournaments are the big ones.

The fest-size shows people travel out of state for. Folks will pay anywhere from twenty to a hundred dollars in a weekend for some extremely challenging matches. You'll find most of the die-hard enthusiasts here and get the rare sighting of some legends of the game.

The way these competitions work is simple. Everyone buys into a main pot and is slated to play one random person on a randomly selected game. No extra balls are played in the interest of fairness and time, interference with your opponent's game results in a loss for that match, and order of play is decided by a coin flip. The highest score after three or five balls, depending on the era of the machine, wins. Once you lose three matches, you are out of the running. If you make it to the top four, you win cash and glory!

As a punk, some of my core values are equality, inclusivity, and acceptance. Booking shows and supporting bands taught me about how badly people get fucked over when they're trying to do what makes them happy, or treated awful for the way they look and who they are. That kind of shit bothers me a lot.

I've noticed the competitive pinball niche skews male. I've tried to sort it out and make sense of it and one thing I'm sure of is that it's not malevolent. But there does exist a long-running culture, embedded subconsciously, that doesn't encourage

"I LOVE PINBALL, BUT I SUCK AT IT"

Even the simplest machine has hundreds of switches, optics, coils, targets, ramps, coin mechanics, and other parts. Then there's a tiny metal ball slamming into anything on the playfield crossing its path, thrashing around as if it were in a circle pit at its favorite band's show. It's an amusement park of chaos beneath the glass. But pinball is a tangible game, consisting of equal parts physics, skill, and luck that can be manipulated in your favor. All too many times I meet people who adamantly enjoy the game, though admit to being terrible at it.

What's really cool about pinball is it gets cheaper as you build skill. All machines have a base replay score that goes up each time it's achieved, making it more and more of a challenge. If you are able to continually earn replays, you could be playing several games on just fifty cents (note that some newer games cost up to a dollar a play, but some are only a quarter). Here are some basic moves to master.

First things first: there is never any good reason to be flipping both flippers at the same time. Never. Not only will it not save your ball from draining, it ensures zero ball control and flags you as a newbie. Make every flip matter and try to minimize flailing.

Dead Pass: Probably the most terrifying move to try and all you have

to do is absolutely nothing. As long as the ball is not traveling straight down the middle (SDTM) of the playfield, let it make contact with the flipper and bounce off the rubber ring over to the next flipper. For example, if the ball is screaming towards your left flipper, don't flip, do nothing, and it will dead bounce over to the right flipper where you can trap it.

Trap: As the ball comes to the flipper, given the right momentum, you can lift the flipper and hold the ball right on the flipper, keeping it in a trap. From there you have time to settle down, think, and focus your shots. This skill is super beneficial during multi-balls and is referred to as a cradle separation.

Cradle Separation: In this move, which is definitely advanced, you have one ball on one flipper and two on the other. Or any combination of one and one, one and three, and so on, depending on how many balls are involved in the multi-ball. *Apollo 13* is the largest that comes to mind, with a thirteen ball multi-ball and *Indiana Jones: Pinball Adventure* will hit you with eight at the same time. Once you have this set up, look for your jackpot shot and trace it back to your flippers. Figure out what moves you need to execute in order to hit that shot and then exploit it for as long as you can!

Slap Save: I've found many people new to the game have a fear of shoving or nudging the machine. This is so crucial to coercing the ball to go where you want it and ensuring a longer play time. When I first started playing, I lacked the upper body strength needed to move a table while playing so I used to wedge my leg under the front of the machine for leverage. Slap saves are done by simply hitting the side of the table that you'd like the ball to land. These are so important for when the ball is heading SDTM and is potentially the only move that will allow you to regain control. Otherwise it's Drain City, population you.

Ideally, you become friends with someone who owns pinball tables and will let you wail on them for free. Or, if you're lucky enough to have a museum in your area, like the ones in Vegas, Alameda, or Seattle, you can pay a cover charge and play to your heart's content. Otherwise, just keep quarters on you and stick to it. The majority of pinball skill is repetition, timing, and muscle memory. Everything else is memorizing rule sets on individual games and most modern pins have a cheat sheet of how to play them directly on the table. Practice doesn't make perfect, but it does make better!

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FLIPPERS HAVE ONLY
BEEN USED FOR A MERE
SIXTY-SEVEN YEARS AND
PINBALL IS OVER THREE
CENTURIES OLD!

women to be strong or combative within our society in general. While pinball playing doesn't seem to be a sport requiring strength, oftentimes skillful nudging and shaking of the table is necessary to save your ball from draining and often women lack the ability to move 350 pounds with their arms. Though beyond that, early on pinball was marketed with images of attractive females in skimpy outfits. Sadly, this is still happening as Stern just announced Whoa Nellie! Big Juicy Melons, a supposedly tongue-in-cheek game about boobs. The main character, a farmer's daughter, holds melons at chest level with Daisy Dukes on while being literally drooled over by farm hands, one of which is drunk. How any female would feel respected playing this is completely beyond me.

I became an advocate for females playing more pinball in an attempt to push a much-needed cultural shift and have written several articles for *Skill Shot* on the topic.

I also started a women-only monthly tournament called Babes in Pinland after being inspired by Belles and Chimes in San Francisco. Nearly a year later, I'm still meeting girls who come to Babes for their first tournament. While, yes, this excludes men, I think that opening a space for women to feel welcome and comfortable absolutely trumps that.

**SURE PLAYS A MEAN PIN...
—MORE LIKE THE WHO
CARES?!?**

As a pinball enthusiast/addict, I want to go on record saying I never want to hear reference of "Pinball Wizard" ever again.

There's so much more to the game than that damned song. Basically what a person is telling me when they ask if I have a supple wrist is, "Wow, that's a neat hobby that I don't know anything about but I heard this Who song once!"

One of my favorite moments was playing the game Funhouse, while listening to *Funhouse* by The Stooges, between bands at the Funhouse venue for a show. While I wasn't taken down there by three Puerto Rican girls to play a lonely pinball machine like in Rancid's "Olympia, WA," I did find that music has a huge relevance in the game... much more than a popular song from a rock opera.

Sometimes it's the music that's programmed with the table that I end up loving. The song during multi-ball on William's Monster Bash sticks in my head every time. ZZ Top's catchy "La Grange" plays on a loop in William's The Getaway. Bally's table Xenon has an atmospheric tune composed entirely by Suzanne Ciani. Not many women are involved in game development, so Ciani's work on Xenon stood out to me a lot. She was one of the first to program a voice—her own—onto a pinball machine.

Then there's William's White Water in which the player advances from raft to raft via a series of shots in order to get to the final mode of the game. Each time you hit one of those shots the song changes ever so slightly, keeping the same basic theme. Black Knight 2000, also by Williams (can you tell I like them the best?) plays a radical ballad in which the black knight laughs an evil laugh and shouts things like "Give me your money!" Go to YouTube and look it up, it's something everyone needs to hear.

On the flip side, there are bands that are inspired enough by pinball to reference it in

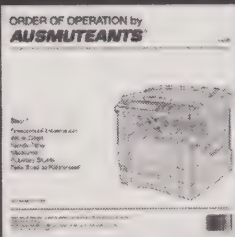
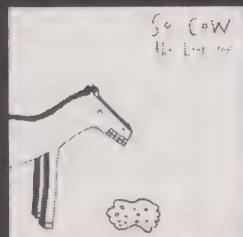
songs! Remember, we're not talking about *Tommy* or Pete Townsend or Elton John anymore. Here's a short list of bands that are probably on your radar and their song that mentions the silver ball: The Clash's "Koka Kola," Generation X's "Kiss Me Deadly," The Queers' "Girl About Town," Big D And The Kids Table's "Pinball," In Flames' "Pinball Map," Sage Francis's "Runaways," Black Label Society's "Superterrorizer," and The Blood Brothers' "Six Nightmares in the Pinball Masquerade." Surprised? I was too.

Other honorable mentions of punk rock/pinball tie-ins include: Stiff Little Fingers' score the soundtrack to the computer-simulated game Pro-Pinball: Timeshock!, *Hot Pinball Rock Volume 1 and 2*, which features songs written specifically about pinball and was included in a mid '90s zine called *Multiball*, and a studio in Canada that's doing a series of John Peel-style band recordings plus pinball playing called Pinball Sessions.

PUNK PINBALL PARALLELS — SUBCULTURE CROSSOVER

My attraction to punk and pinball often run on parallel tracks. Both are capable of building a subculture of misfits. Both have roots in political action. Both are huge proponents of music (several bands have machines themed after them, and AC/DC pinball even has a headphone jack built into it). Both were considered seedy and underground. During its ban, you could only find pinball in speakeasies and hidden spots. Proving to the Man that a pinball ban was bogus is really awesome. Fortunately, the negative connotations of

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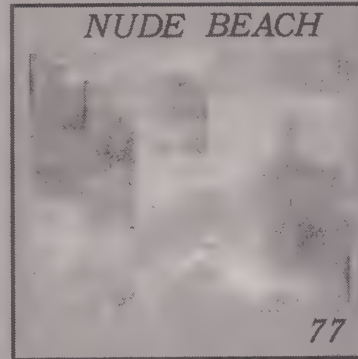
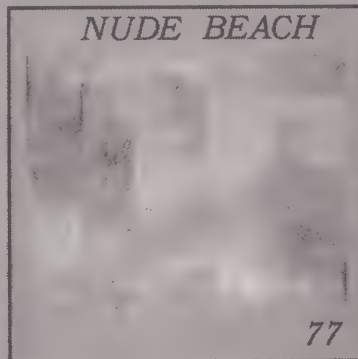
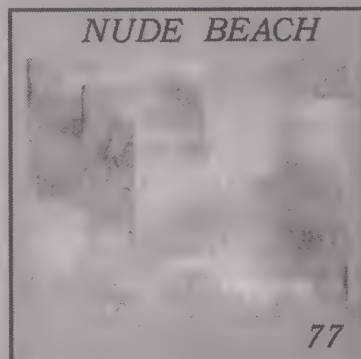
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the game have faded away and pinball is ramping up for a resurgence.

I've been told by a veteran of the game, Dave Stewart, that he loves playing with punks, as they're often the most open and inclusive people. Now that pinball is getting its much-deserved resurgence, more friends who I know through music are jumping into the hobby. I'm seeing them pop into local barcades, play pins while bands are on, and every so often, play in local tournaments. Me? I'm sitting close to the top thousand players worldwide (out of 19,000 ranked

players) and am ranked fortieth in my state. I've dived head first into this hobby: running tournaments, writing for pinball zines, captaining the top team in my league, and generally elevating people's interest in pinball. Last year I even got a pinball tattoo! Now if only I could hold back enough quarters to afford my own table.



Organizations/Resources

- **PAPA—Professional Amateur Pinball Association** (papa.org) Tutorials, techniques/skills, match play videos, host annual world championship tournament, located in Pennsylvania
- **IFPA—International Flipper Pinball Association** (ifpabinball.org) Calendar of all sanctioned tournaments, authority on pinball rankings, tracks World Ranking Pinball Points (WRPPs) for all player profiles
- **IPDB—International Pinball Database** (ipdb.org) Information about every known pinball machine ever made, includes photos, features of each table and a synopsis of the table



FANZINES: THE SILVER BALL IN PRINT

Independent, small press publishing has a strong presence in pinball with three popular titles and hopefully more to follow.

Gordon Orneleas, who ran the punk fanzine *WDC Period*, along with friend Brad Hayden started *Skill Shot* seven years ago simply because of their love of the game. It has since become the Seattle area's main pinball reference guide with the most current list of tables, organized by neighborhood and printed in each issue, along with features, news, and gossip. They have so much community support that they can cover the breadth of the metro area and often are one of the first to announce game changes. Full-size, double-sided, zine subscriptions are five dollars, or you can get the whole collection (issues 1-33) at skill-shot.com.

Drop Target Zine is run by Alec Longstreth in California and Jon Chad in Massachusetts. The two comics met at college and discovered their affinity for

pinball at the same time when meeting at a pool hall for a project. With most of the U.S.A. between them, they are limited to one zine a year that culminates when they return to their alma mater to teach workshops. This zine covers interviews, personal narrative comics, and detailed drawings of dream machines they wish existed. Issues are five dollars and are half-size zines, bound with a screen-printed cover. It's available at droptarget.blogspot.com.

Slam Tilt Zine out of Australia is a new addition to the self-published passion for pinball and was inspired by *Drop Target*. There is only one issue so far, but it is fantastic. It covers interviews with local players and artists who use pinball parts, maintenance, how to play, and where to find machines in Sydney. It's a half-size zine, bound with a screen-printed cover. It's five dollars and available at slamtiltzine.com.

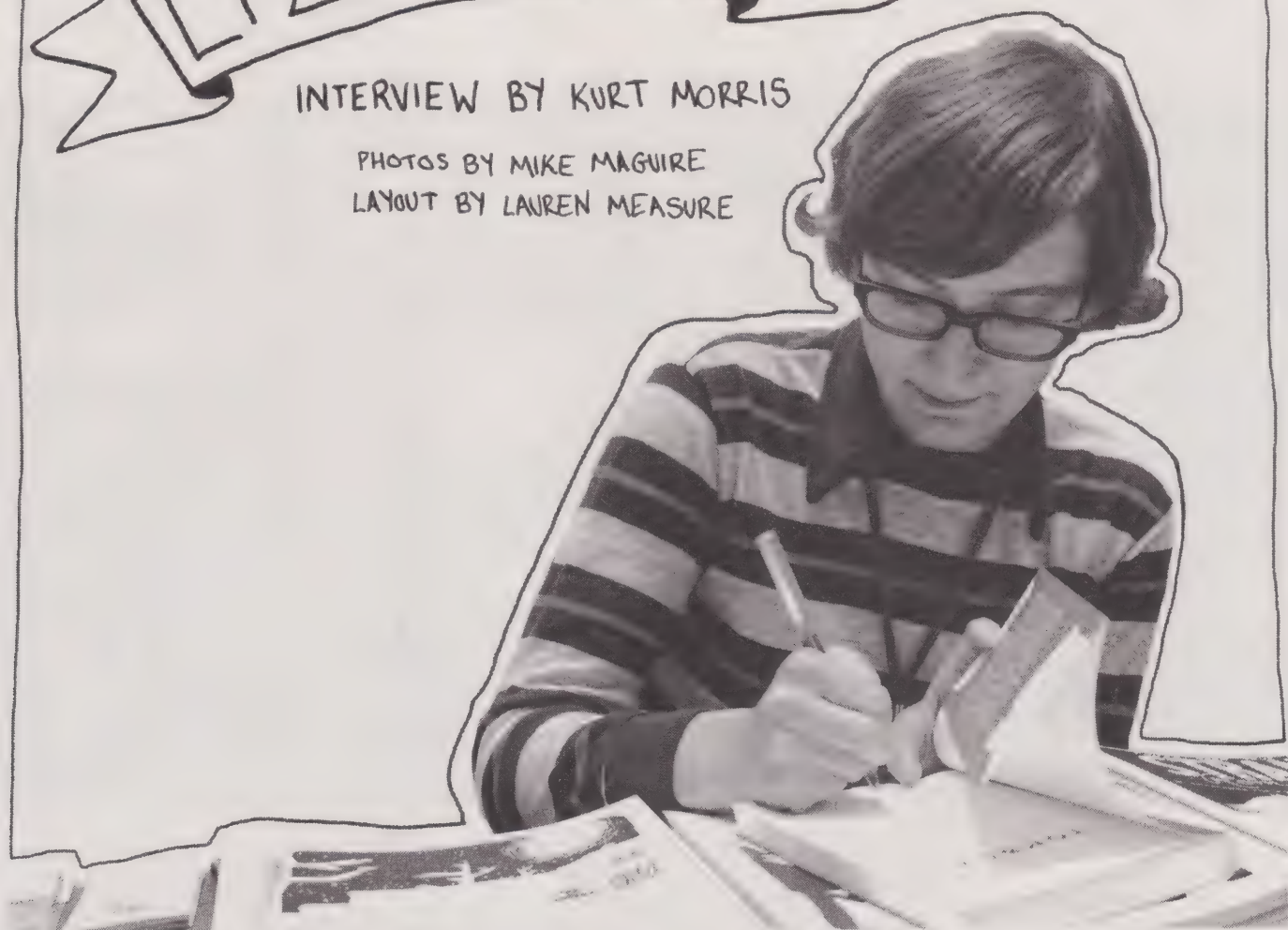
INTERVIEW WITH

LIZ PRINCE

INTERVIEW BY KURT MORRIS

PHOTOS BY MIKE MAGUIRE

LAYOUT BY LAUREN MEASURE



Liz Prince is a funny person—and not in that she's-kind-of-odd way.

She's sarcastic, witty, and sometimes just plain goofy. Anyone who spends more than a few minutes with her will pick up on that. You can read that in her comics, too. She's also written the award-winning *Will You Still Love Me if I Wet the Bed?* (Answer: no) and *Alone Forever*. Her latest book is *Tomboy*, a graphic memoir of her childhood and teen years.

Do you remember how awkward and hard it was trying to figure out who you were and where you belonged in your teens? Add in the problem of not fitting in with societal norms about gender, and it's that much more frustrating. Liz is able to bring her humor into those situations in a way that doesn't sugarcoat the uphill battles, making the final product an honest, engaging portrait of her life.

She also explores ideas of gender and normalcy and attacks them in a way that isn't threatening but rather enlightening and astute.

Originally from Santa Fe, New Mexico, Liz attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and now resides in the greater Boston area. She lives with her cats, Wolfman and Dracula, and is a full-time artist.

Seeing as how we both live in the Boston area, we had dinner at a Thai restaurant in Chinatown and talked about—amongst other things—*Tomboy*, the supporting book tour, and growing older. Liz declined to order the delicious bubble tea, a decision she would come to regret later in the interview.

Kurt: In *Tomboy*, one of the things you write about is your problem with dating. How does dating change as you grow older as a tomboy?

Liz: I think as your social sphere grows to be more people you actually want to be associated with and not just people you're thrown together with in a school environment, you start to meet people who are more open to the "woo" that you're pitching.

Kurt: [laughs]

Liz: I would argue that the evolution of a tomboy is kind of like that of a punk girl. A lot of punk girls are more tomboyish than a lot of regular girls are. I haven't had that much of a problem of dating within punk. I also have very little experience of dating outside of punk. It's almost a prerequisite for me, which may not be fair. But you're interested in what you're interested in.

Kurt: I can understand that. So what did your boyfriend think of the memoir?

Liz: We never really talked in-depth about it. He was helping me edit it, so he was reading it as I was writing it and catching things. You know, he and I have an interesting relationship because he's not someone who is all that interested in comics in general. He likes a couple of things, but we didn't meet each other because of comics. And that's pretty refreshing because I'm the kind of person who tends to date outside of my craft. A ton of people have been like, "Wouldn't it be great to date another comic artist?" And it's like, "No. I don't think so." I think that would actually be kind of horrible.

Kurt: How did your boyfriend help you edit the book?

Liz: He was one of the only people who was reading it while I was writing. I'd finish a chapter and I'd send it to my editor and then I'd also ask him, "Hey, can you read this? Let me know if anything doesn't work." It's good to have the perspective of someone who isn't necessarily ingrained in comics to be able to read it for things that someone who doesn't frequently read comics might find to be a stumbling block. My editor was the same way. He hasn't really worked largely in comics before, so he was able to point out things that I thought made perfect sense but when he read it he would tell me, "I don't understand this." And I was able to look at it from a different perspective and see how if you hadn't been reading comics your entire life that sequence might not make sense.

Kurt: How did you end up working with a publisher (Zest) that primarily handles teen books? Did you approach them or did they approach you? You hadn't put anything out with them, right?

Liz: No.

Kurt: Do you have an agent?

Liz: No. They approached me. It was some nebulous connection I had with the editor there that I'm working with. Zest was looking for female graphic novelists to do either autobiography or non-fiction comics for them. They're trying to branch out and do that. This person from museum school (School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston) remembered that I drew comics and told them about me. When they initially contacted me it was the summer of 2012 and they said that they were interested in seeing if I wanted to write a teen or young adult book for them. But I didn't feel like I had anything that fit that audience. My response was basically like, "If I come up with something I'll get in touch with you, but I'm not just going to come up with something for the sake of coming up with something."

If writing a 250-page graphic novel seems really daunting, writing a 250-page graphic novel about something I'm not really that interested in or excited about seems even more daunting. But hearing

Her mom was buying it and I said to her, "Just to let you know, there's some language and some mild drug references." She said, "Oh it's not a big deal. As long as there's no murdering."

the types of things they were interested in, I put them in touch with my friend Ramsey Beyer who did a book for them called *Little Fish*. So I gave them someone else to tide them over.

Kurt: Was that scary to have such a good opportunity fall in your lap and then say, "I can't help you?" I write but have never published a book, so if somebody came to me and said, "We want you to put out a book," I'd be like, "Awesome! That is so cool!" But when they told me what they wanted—knowing me, I'd probably try and force it.

Liz: If it had been my first book, I probably would've felt that way. There were certainly times when I thought, "What if I threw away my chance?" But I didn't really know what a teen book would be. I didn't know if I had that in me. I still don't know if, intimately, *Tomboy* is really a teen book.

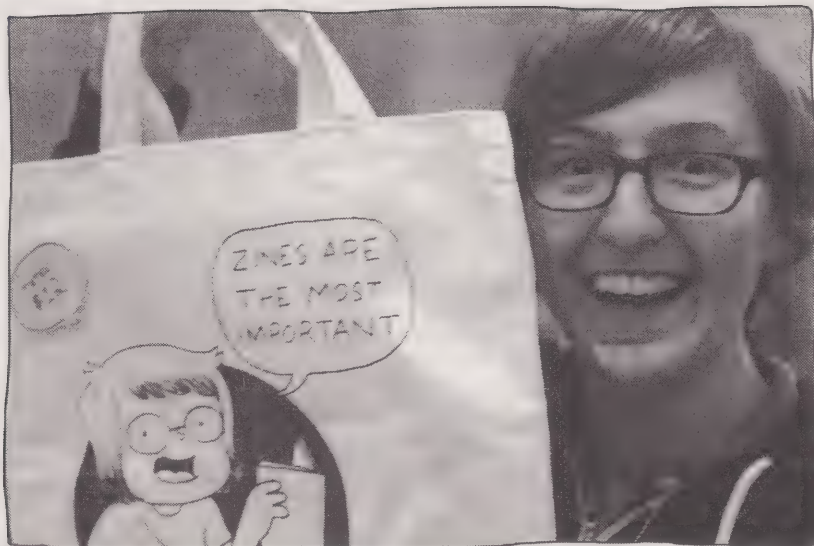
Kurt: What have you heard from teens?

Liz: I haven't heard from almost any teens directly. I've heard from parents of teens and I've heard from some parents who bought the book for their kids and then read it themselves and decided that it would be a while before they'd give it to them. But they really enjoyed the book or they understood their tomboy daughter a little better after reading it. That's been a really positive thing that I didn't consider would happen. But as far as actual teens getting in touch with me who had read the book—I don't have any evidence of it.

I finally sold a copy to a teenage girl for the first time at the Alternative Press Expo a couple weeks ago in San Francisco. This girl ran up to the table and said, "This is the book I want!" And her mom said, "Are you sure? You can only get one book. We haven't even looked around. This is the first table we went to." And the girl said, "This is my book!"

Kurt: Did you talk to her any more? Did you ask, "How did you hear about this?"





If high school really was the best years of your life, then that's really sad. You peaked very young.

Liz: I don't think she had. I think she just saw the cover and decided that she wanted it.

Kurt: Wow. Any idea how old she was? Because teens can be nineteen and they can also be twelve.

Liz: She looked on the young side. Her mom was buying it and I said to her, "Just to let you know, there's some language and some mild drug references." She said, "Oh it's not a big deal. As long as there's no murdering." And I said, "No...not in *this* volume."

Kurt: [laughs] It'd be interesting to see if *Tomboy* makes its way into high school libraries or public libraries.

Liz: Interestingly, the Catholic high school I went to and talk about in *Tomboy*—when I was in Santa Fe at the beginning of September I did a slide show and reading. A friend of mine from high school is dating a woman who is now teaching English at that high school and she told me that she showed the librarian at the high school the book and they got like fifteen copies of it. I was like, "Did they read the book?" "Yeah. She read it and really liked it." And I said, "Wow. I guess that's the most progressive Catholic school on the planet." I guess it kind of even was when I was going there. Thinking back and being like, "Wow. The principal, who was this really old dude, let a girl just totally be like, 'I don't want to wear dresses to Mass. I want to wear a shirt and tie.'" He allowed that. It seems like something that wouldn't fly in a situation like that.

Kurt: I was going to say, I've been writing a memoir and looking back at things forces me to readdress how I was thinking about my life for a long time. I'd think that part of my life really sucked and then I'd think about it more and realize there were actually some good times. Did you have to do a lot of that or were you not a negative person like I was?

Liz: Despite the fact that *Tomboy* is a book about being different and being bullied and having a hard time fitting in, I don't remember junior high or high school or even elementary school as being particularly horrible.

Kurt: Despite the occasional bullies and name-calling?

Liz: Yeah. When my mom first read the book she said, "This was so awful. I had no idea it was so bad for you." I was like, "This is a concentrated version of that. This is eighteen years put into a book that is specifically about gender." So it's not as though every day I went to school and someone would yell, "You're a dyke!" But it happened enough that it made an impression on me. But I've also been someone who didn't really care that much. I was such a smart ass that I took it as an opportunity to say something shitty back. Like calling a kid a Frankendork. That's the best insult ever.

Kurt: You also grew up in Santa Fe, which is somewhat more progressive than other places. Speaking of Santa Fe, how was it going back and doing a reading there? Were there people from high school there?

Liz: Not besides the guy who set up the reading for me. I got to do the reading at Warehouse 21, which is the teen center I talked about in the book. Although, since I left they're not in the same building. They're basically in the same place but that old building was torn down and they built this newer building. I can see how it's a way better space, but it doesn't have the same feel to me. So while I was at Warehouse 21 and they still have the same mission and are better equipped to provide these services, I was still like, "Meh. It's not like one shitty room with two shitty rooms off of it."

But honestly, the Santa Fe reading was the most disappointing because I probably had the highest hopes for it. It wasn't particularly well attended and the audience wasn't very engaged. I didn't get many questions afterwards. I don't love public speaking, but one of the things that helps is when people laugh at the very obvious jokes that I'm making and there wasn't much laughter at the jokes.

Kurt: In the book your parents both seem to be pretty cool about you being a tomboy. Is that accurate? Or was writing it like that just a way to make them happy?

Liz: No. I feel like my life would've been very different if my parents were not okay with me being

the way I am. I think life would be a lot harder if all the kids in school, some of the teachers, and a lot of the adults you encounter in your life are telling you there's something wrong with you *and* your parents are also reflecting that. But the fact that my parents were so, "Whatever. It's just clothes. Who gives a fuck?" They allowed me to be more secure.

Kurt: Where did they get that? Was that the way they were raised, too, or were they hippies?

Liz: They were pretty hippie-ish. Both of them were not raised that way at all. That's probably why they decided to be like that. "As long as you guys aren't poking each others' eyes out with sticks, we don't really care."

Kurt: Speaking of family, one thing I've talked about with other writers and in writing classes I've taken is how to deal with the material and the way it makes certain family and friends look. It doesn't even necessarily have to be bad things. Someone could just say, "I would never say that," or "That isn't how I talk." Did you talk to your family and friends beforehand and say, "Here's what I'm doing? Get ready," or did you just put it out and say, "Here it is?"

Liz: Maybe this is a downfall of my personality, but I've always just written my comics and been like, "If there's fallout I'll deal with it." So far [knocks on wooden table] there hasn't been too much fallout. The first time my brother read the book his only criticism was, "Why did you change my name?" "Um, because I'm protecting your identity. It would snowball. If I used your real name then people could start making connections and figure out who other people are." Even if people gave consent, it would be too easy to figure people out.

But I was also thinking about it and I looked at my yearbook from that Catholic school when I was writing this book to remind myself of certain people. I had gone through at some point and highlighted certain peoples' names and I don't remember ninety percent of them. So I highlighted their names to try and remember something about them and looking at it I have no idea who this person is. They're a total stranger. They used to mean something to me in some capacity.

When you're in high school—or even when you're an adult—you think people are way more focused on you than they actually are. How many people from high school will read this book and know who someone is? It's such a small percentage of those people. Actually, when I was at that Catholic school, there weren't that many people who I was close friends with.

Kurt: In an interview with you that I read online, someone asked

when the last time was that you cried reading something and you said it was *Tomboy*. Was that recently?

Liz: Oh, writing the book and then re-reading it. There was just some stuff in that book that was very emotionally raw for me, whether it came off that way for people reading it or not. But that was also the actual, honest answer. I haven't read a book since, where that happened.

Kurt: What, specifically, is the most raw thing you can think of in *Tomboy* that gets to you?

Liz: Now that it's existed for such a long time I feel very differently about it. A lot of the bullying that took place was harder for me to re-read or think about or write about than the stuff later on. Once I was in high school, I was like, "Whatever." Obviously I want people to think I'm cool, but if the preppy jocks don't like me it's no big loss. Also, the degradation of some of the friendships I had is a little hard to look back on. It's been over fifteen years in almost every case, but I wonder what it would be like if we were still friends.

Kurt: Yeah. Like with the girl, Bree, who turned out to be a huge liar. When you introduced her with a separate page, I thought, "Cool. This is the girl who is going to become Liz's best friend and she's gonna be the one who introduces Liz to a whole new world of music and all this other crazy stuff." And a few pages later I was like, "What a bitch!"

Liz: [laughs] Yeah.

Kurt: Did a lot of people ask, "Am I going to be in your book?" Or, "Can I read what you've written about me?"

Liz: I'm not in contact with most of the people who appear in the book because they're people from elementary school or junior high who I don't really like. I think I'm friends with a lot of people on Facebook because that just ends up happening but having actually seen or talked to any of them—no.

Kurt: High school was both good and bad for me. Thinking back on some of those people—I'm friends with a couple of them, but...

Liz: Are there people who high school was genuinely really good for? I don't think I've ever talked to somebody...

Kurt: We're not friends with those types of people. But they do exist. They exist outside the punk spectrum.

Liz: Okay. Those are the people who are maybe really popular in high school and then go on to boring jobs and having kids. And that's what they remember. "In high school I was a wild and crazy person." Not to generalize, but...

Kurt: No. That's pretty much exactly how it is, I think.

Liz: That's what I imagine they're like anyway. If high school really was the best years of your life, then that's really sad. You peaked very young.

Kurt: I agree. I like getting old. But, evidently, I'm one of the only people.

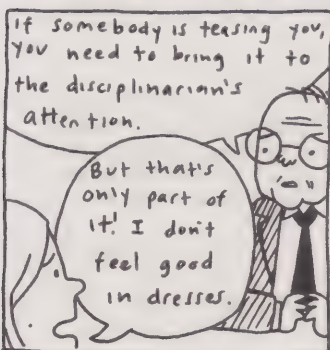
Liz: No way. I'm so stoked on it.

Kurt: Really? How come?

Liz: Because I'm naturally the kind of person who isn't a party person or even a social person and I think as people get older they naturally become less social. They're in relationships or they're married or they have kids or they have jobs that keep them from being like, "Oh hey! It's two in the morning! You want to go get a taco?" Not that I hated that, but I look back on that and—I used to text friends at midnight and say, "What are you doing? Do you want to go ride bikes somewhere?" And it's cool but I also can't believe I did that. Now I'm like, "It's 9:30. I should probably get in bed and read for an hour before I go to sleep." And I don't even have a day job. That's just pure oldness.

Kurt: And it's funny how that becomes something we become comfortable with.

The anxiety of being sent to Brother George's office for the first time was eased by the fact that he was my Latin teacher, so at least I knew he was nice.



I felt genuinely celebrated for being an individual,



which was a nice change of pace.



By the time 9th grade started, Terri and Erin had both moved away, making Phyllis the only real friend I had left at school.



Yeah, high school was "the wild," alright.

Liz: I was just thinking about how I've always had a good amount of social anxiety. Before I go and do almost anything I get this wave of feeling physically sick. Even on the train here, I was feeling kind of sick.

Kurt: Aww. It's just me, Liz.

Liz: Yeah, I know. But it happens with anyone. I could be going to see my mom and feel the same way. I think it's because social situations are fun but sometimes they're hard in certain ways. And I always have this little wave of, "What if this is the hard one?!" And they hardly ever are.

Kurt: [laughs] I didn't want to tell you this, but I have a gun underneath the table.

Liz: [laughs] "Keep talking about your book!" "Godammit! Order the bubble tea!"

Kurt: [laughs] This is the hard one, Liz. This is the hard one. *Razorcake*: we take no prisoners.

Liz: That could be your nickname: Kurt "The Hard One" Morris.

Kurt: [laughs] Hmm. I don't know how I feel about that. But it's interesting that the anxiety stuff doesn't show up in *Tomboy* at all.

Liz: I think I always just normalized it. I'm a person who, once I'm acclimated into a social situation, I'm very comfortable. And that acclimation doesn't take very long. But going to a show, it's like, "What if I don't know any—oh, there's someone."

Kurt: So you lived in Ipswich (Massachusetts) recently before moving back to Boston. Did you move out there to write or did you just happen to be out there and writing at the same time?

Liz: I moved out there because my boyfriend works in Ipswich. It's also really cheap to live there as opposed to here. I've also lived in my neighborhood for fourteen years, so trying something new was not



This'll probably be the first year I've actually made money in a way that would make somebody say, "Oh, well, you're a legitimate person."

something I was opposed to. Now that I've moved back, I wish I were living in a different neighborhood in the greater Boston area.

Kurt: You wrote *Tomboy* in Ipswich, though, right?

Liz: Right. As far as a place to write a 250-page book in nine months, it doesn't get any better than that. There's nothing to do there. It's nice. There's outdoorsy stuff, but it wasn't hard for me to sit there and draw for fourteen hours a day.

Kurt: I was just curious how important it is to get away from things when you're trying to work on a book-length project.

Liz: I'd like to write another book and I have several different things in the works, but I'm trying to decide which project to focus on next. But part of me wonders if I would be able to do that kind of a thing here (in the city). I'm not sure I would have to because that timeline is kind of aberrant as far as any book goes. I would like to do a book a year. I think it's possible. I would prefer to have one project I'm working on as opposed to doing more freelance work with lots of different deadlines.

Kurt: Well, I asked about that because there seems to be this stereotype of going to some rural place and writing a book, but it



Bree began hanging out with Phyllis and me. She had a mysterious past that intrigued us.



Stories she told us included:

- * She's a recovering meth addict (ten years before *Breaking Bad*).
- * She's in an on-again, off-again relationship with a 20-year-old.
- * She was the most popular girl at Capshaw, and her best friend is Ian, the most popular boy at Santa Fe High.



seems to actually work for a lot of people.

Liz: Yeah, like *The Shining*.

Kurt: [laughs] Okay. That's a bad example. So how hard is it to be a full-time artist?

Liz: Execution... for me it is not hard. But in actually making a living and having something to show for yourself—that is hard. This'll probably be the first year I've actually made money in a way that would make somebody say, "Oh, well, you're a legitimate person." As opposed to every other year that I've ever lost money or made very little money.

Kurt: So how do you afford to live?

Liz: Well, my grandmother died and she left me not a shitload of money, but probably as much as people make working a desk job, so I was like, "I'm punk rich!" I had been working at the MFA (Museum of Fine Arts) library for a couple years full-time and I'd saved up some money from doing that and I had this money from an inheritance and so I thought, "I'll try it and if it works it works and if it doesn't I'll have to get another shitty job." I always assumed I'd have a job and draw comics because I never assumed I'd make money off of it. Nobody talks about making money off of comics.

Kurt: Some people do.

Liz: Yeah, and I know that. And I think I've almost figured out the method. I think it involves being very fast. You don't get a huge advance for drawing a graphic novel. At least at the level I'm at, you don't. If you take four years to write a book you're like, "Oh cool. I made five thousand dollars a year while I was working on this book." But if you can write one book a year, then that's decent. Somebody who works at Starbucks probably makes that much money a year, too, but...

Kurt: At least you're doing what you want to do. That's a nice thing.

It's a hard thing to make that leap and then not worry that you're ruining your life or something like that.

Liz: One of the things about getting older that I have not liked so much is that I have a lot of fear about the future in a financial way. Before I was like, "Whatever. I'm twenty-five. Who cares about that?" But now I'm like, "Oh, I mean...oh." If you're self-employed you're probably not paying into social security. You're not paying into some kind of 401(k). You're not getting a retirement fund.

Kurt: Yeah, I'm kind of paranoid about that stuff, too, which is why I've gone the path I've gone to some degree.

Liz: I kind of miss the stability of having a job because on days when you're trying to be creative and nothing works and it feels very unproductive—even if I worked at a video store, or something—at least if I had gone and done that, at least I could say, "Well, I contributed to something in society today."

Kurt: Where would Liz Prince work if she had to go back into the working world?

Liz: I dunno. I could see working in a produce section at a grocery store.

Kurt: Let's close on a positive note: what's made you happy recently?

Liz: My cats always make me happy. That's kind of a dorky answer, but they just do. I've been reading a lot. I just finished that Roxane Gay book, *Bad Feminist*. That was really good. Also, I have a skeleton that sits on my porch. I call it Bonestorm. I filled its chest with red Christmas lights so it looks like guts. That makes me happy.

lizprincepower.com

The Real Kids



Interview with John Felice

Interview
Ryan
Leach

Photos
Lindsey
Anderson
and
Lisa
Merrill

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Becky
Bennett



Many *Razorcake* readers will undoubtedly be familiar with the name John Felice.

For those who aren't—and there's no shame in that—his past work with The Modern Lovers and The Real Kids will surely ring a bell.

John Felice had the good fortune of growing up next door to Jonathan Richman in suburban Boston. Richman, five years Felice's senior, introduced him to the Velvet Underground and other leaders of rock's avant-garde. Like a sponge, Felice—a fervent reader of Lester Bangs—absorbed the late '60s proto-punk sounds emanating from New York, Ann Arbor, Michigan, and San Francisco.

Felice formed The Modern Lovers with Richman in the summer of 1970. The Modern Lovers—which was widely regarded as one of the most influential bands of their generation—was a trial by fire for Felice, who was still in high school. The Modern Lovers were courted by a number of major record labels almost right out of the gate, and they eventually signed to Warner Bros. However, Felice was gone before The Modern Lovers had a chance to implode (which they did a short time later), with the goal of starting his own band.

Inspired by the Flamin' Groovies and his friends in the New York Dolls, Felice started The Real Kids around 1972, but it took a few years for the band to really gain traction.

I missed my childhood. Instead of playing hockey, I was playing rock'n'roll with a bunch of degenerates in The Modern Lovers.

The Real Kids released their classic self-titled debut on Marty Thau's Red Star in 1977. It was chock full of classics ("All Kindsa Girls," "My Baby's Book," "Better Be Good") in what should have been an auspicious beginning for the band—a stunning debut released on a promising new label. But it all came crashing down when Red Star's financial backers pulled out of the label.

Stranded, The Real Kids went on the back burner while Felice headed a short-lived group called the Taxi Boys.

The Real Kids caught a second wind in the early '80s, releasing their sophomore effort, *Outta Place*, on a Boston independent in 1982. A year later, the band cut their third record, *Hit You Hard*, for French label New Rose. Poor distribution in the United States ensured that these releases were lost on the record-buying public, a real shame as *Outta Place* and *Hit You Hard* contain some of Felice's finest songs. A Felice solo record, *Nothing Pretty* (1987), was left to die on the vine when Ace of Heart's distributor went out of business the week of the album's release. While active in music throughout the '90s, mostly with the Devotions and at the end of the decade and early 2000s with Real Kids gigs, Felice's recorded output—outside of some essential Norton reissues—ground to a halt after the release of *Nothing Pretty*.

This year The Real Kids came back with a vengeance.

Growing interest in the band along with a recent Boston residency, coincided with the release of *Shake...Outta Control*. It's the first new Real Kids record in thirty years.

The record is largely comprised of tracks that had been earmarked for the second Red Star record (which of course never happened) and is masterfully produced by Ace of Heart's Rick Harte. Optimistic about the future and currently preparing to record another album (with Rick Harte again at the helm), it appears Felice and The Real Kids have caught their third wind.

The difference this time: an added sense of security—in the form of Ace of Hearts—that had been missing the first two times around.

Ryan: You grew up in suburban Boston.

John: I grew up in the town of Natick, which is about fifteen miles west of Boston on the I-90 Turnpike. It was a really convenient place to live—just a short drive outside of downtown Boston. In the late '60s and early '70s there were free concerts and a lot of other things going on in Boston. One thing that I used to do was go to the Cambridge Common—located right across the Charles River from Boston, next to Harvard Square. All types of different local bands would play there every Sunday. The J. Geils Band and Aerosmith got their starts there and I'd catch them. I eventually started playing at the Cambridge Common when I joined The Modern Lovers. It was a good time to live next to Boston.

Ryan: Boston also had a strong connection to New York City and The Velvet Underground, obviously with Doug Yule and then Willie Alexander. (Bostonian Doug Yule replaced John Cale in the Velvet Underground in 1968. Willie Alexander, also of Boston and a former bandmate of Yule's in the Grass Menagerie, replaced Sterling Morrison in the Velvet Underground in 1971.)

John: Yeah.

Ryan: I knew you were younger than Jonathan Richman, but you were exposed to all of this music at a very young age.

John: I joined The Modern Lovers when I was fifteen. That was the summer of 1970.

Ryan: When The Modern Lovers opened for the New York Dolls, you couldn't have been more than seventeen years old. That's pretty mind blowing.

John: Honestly, at the time I didn't think it was a very big deal. All of this was just happening around me. Looking back on it, it was interesting. We got to play some good gigs with The Modern Lovers. My friends who were my age—I wasn't really doing the shit that they were doing. I was too busy playing in The Modern Lovers. It came with a whole set of problems.

Ryan: Most fifteen-year-olds are busy riding BMX bikes.

John: I didn't get to do any of that fun stuff. I was into rock'n'roll. I got my first electric guitar at twelve. I was ready to play in The Modern Lovers by the time I was fifteen. When Jonathan (Richman) and I started the band, we were both good to go. I wasn't a great guitar player but I was already coming up with original music. Other kids were learning "Gloria" and "In the Midnight Hour." Everyone was covering The Rascals. We were playing some bizarre music. Even today when I hear The Modern Lovers, it still blows my mind. When we'd play the Cambridge Common, people didn't know what to make of us. Jonathan was weird then. In a lot of ways, I missed my childhood. Instead of playing hockey, I was playing rock'n'roll with a bunch of degenerates in The Modern Lovers. But I wouldn't have changed anything. It was an interesting education.

Ryan: You and Jonathan lived right next to each other.

John: We were next-door neighbors in a very modest, suburban housing development. Boston is where I gained my education in music. A lot of people can point to when they first heard the Velvet Underground's debut record; I got mine when it was first released. I wasn't in college in my twenties when I first heard the Velvets; I was listening to them when I was thirteen. I saw the Velvet Underground live a number of times. They had a big influence on me. Part of that exposure was due to having Jonathan as a next-door neighbor. He was about five years older than me. He turned me on to a lot of stuff I wouldn't have gotten into otherwise. Friends my age were listening to Cat Stevens; I was listening to "Sister Ray."

Ryan: You were already well-informed about great music at an early age.

John: I guess that's the point I'm trying to make but I didn't see it that way. It just didn't occur to me that it was anything out of the ordinary. I recall waiting for the Stooges' first album to come out when I was fourteen. I preordered it from a record store. I'd read about their live shows in *Creem* magazine and I was really impressed. Jonathan had actually seen the Stooges at the Boston Tea Party. He told me how phenomenal they were. I kept checking at the local record store waiting for the album. I played the hell out of it when I finally got it.

Ryan: I spoke with Ross Johnson of the Panther Burns recently and he dropped a great line on me: "We're all the children of Lester Bangs and Richard Meltzer."

John: I read Lester Bangs' articles constantly. He informed a lot of my opinions about music when I was a kid. Like I said, you only realize this in retrospect. Lester Bangs had a real grip on my ideas about music.

Ryan: One of the better early documents of The Modern Lovers is *Live at the Longbranch and More*. Of course, you're on about half the album—the tracks recorded at Harvard University. Before the song "Wake Up Sleepyheads," Jonathan Richman calls you up to the mic where you give a pretty scathing critique of the song's lyrics. Were those statements indicative of the tensions in the band at that point?

John: Yeah. Jonathan and I look back on that and sort of laugh about it. As much as Jonathan was a huge influence on my life, in a lot of ways he was like a big brother. You either sought his approval or you were rebelling against his authority. He was the leader of The Modern Lovers. Jonathan was also all about being straight while I was an aspiring drug addict. There was a constant tension between the two of us. It spilled over into the shows; you can catch it on live tapes from back then. Jonathan would intentionally antagonize me. That's how our relationship was back then. It's weird looking back on it, now that we're both much older—that you spent so much time with one of your best friends, just constantly arguing. Nevertheless, there were moments where the tension worked.

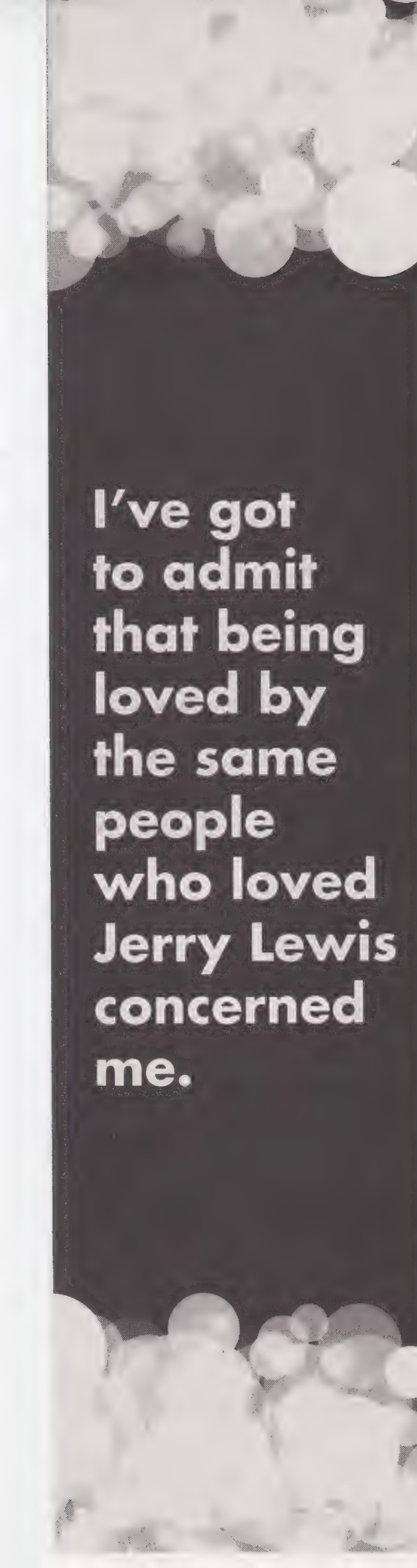
I was also a rebellious kid. At that age you're just a little punk. You think you know everything but you really know nothing. It's funny that you picked up on that. It does capture a moment in time perfectly. Whenever I'm reminded of it by someone or when I hear it, I either laugh or cringe depending on the mood I'm in.

Ryan: Part of the tension had to be attributable to your divergent musical interests. You were into the Flamin' Groovies while Jonathan's lyrics were getting more abstract. As a songwriter, you were also likely feeling stymied by the inability to do your own material.

John: Yeah. I hadn't really found my voice yet songwriting-wise, but I knew what I



John Felice | Lindsey Anderson



I've got
to admit
that being
loved by
the same
people
who loved
Jerry Lewis
concerned
me.

wanted to do. I wasn't happy with the way things were going with The Modern Lovers. Don't get me wrong: Jonathan's music was great. I was proud to play in a band like The Modern Lovers. I liked it best when I was able to have my own stamp on things, no matter how much it drove Jonathan crazy. Right when I was able to afford it, I went out and bought a Marshall stack. Jonathan had his little bitty amp next to my 100-watt Marshall. Anything I could do to make Jonathan's life miserable, I'd do it. I was such an obnoxious kid.

Teenage Head (by the Flamin' Groovies) came out right around then (1971). That was one of my favorite records. I listened to it all the time. Talk about a band being light years ahead of their time.

Ryan: With a legendary live show.

John: I never got to see them live, but I heard great things about their live show. *Teenage Head* helped give me direction. That's what I wanted to be doing. Not that I had anything against being in The Modern Lovers—I didn't—but I didn't see a long future for myself with the band. I knew that in my heart. That being said, around '71 I still had no inkling that I'd leave the group. That only occurred to me later on when I started flexing my muscles a little bit. I wanted to do something more rock'n'roll. The Flamin' Groovies and the Stooges were it for me. Jonathan was constantly telling us to turn it down: "Bring it down, boys." Jesus, Jonathan, how low can the volume go? Now I understand what he was trying to do. At the time I couldn't stand it. I couldn't get my rocks off playing my Marshall amp on less than one. It was pretty comical.

Ryan: I picture Jonathan's eyes getting as big as saucers the first time he saw that Marshall stack.

John: He couldn't believe it. His jaw permanently dropped to the floor when he saw that.

Ryan: A lot happened between your exit from The Modern Lovers and the first Real Kids record (1977). I was surprised to learn recently that you auditioned for The Heartbreakers.

John: I did. Well, The Modern Lovers were being courted by a number of major record labels. Part of the deal was they weren't going to sign us until we got some sort of management. One of the management companies that we were steered toward was Leber and Krebs. They managed the New York Dolls. Marty Thau worked for Leber and Krebs and personally handled the Dolls. Later on they managed Aerosmith and other big bands. Leber and Krebs were a big deal back then.

We (Modern Lovers) went down to talk with them. They got us on a show with the Dolls—I believe it was the '72/'73 New Year's Eve show at the Mercer Arts Center. I had met Billy (Murica) before he passed away. He had gone down to the offices of Leber and Krebs to get paid and deal with business. I hung out with him there. Billy was the boss of the Dolls. We were in this

conference room, just me and Billy. He asked me a bunch of questions and I asked him a bunch of questions back. I had heard all about the New York Dolls. They were *the* band at the time. At that particular moment in history, all you heard about was David Bowie and the Spiders from Mars tour and the New York Dolls. I was interested in what the Dolls were about. Billy and I hit it off really well. I think I met Billy in September of '72. He died shortly afterwards (November 6, 1972). The Dolls took some time off after his death, but the next thing I know we're playing with them at the Mercer. It was one of Jerry Nolan's first shows with the Dolls.

The Mercer was a wild place. It had a *Clockwork Orange* theme going on; there were all these rooms. We played in the auditorium. The Mercer was *the* place in New York at the time. Everything happened at the fucking Mercer—before it caved in (on August 3, 1973). The building literally collapsed in on itself like it was held together by tape.

We played *the* gig and afterwards I started talking with John (Johnny Thunders). We became friends that night. We were both going through similar things in regards to our bands. We were both the babies of our respective groups. He was the youngest guy in the Dolls and was treated as such by David (Johansen). If you knew John at all, you'd know that he was a handful to say the fucking least. If you think I was bad, he was ten times worse. We took a couple cases of beer, went to a back stairway, and got completely fucking hammered. Then it was time to go home.

It was New Year's Eve and David Robinson (Modern Lovers drummer) and I were driving the gear back to Boston. I told David, "I'm quitting. I just don't want to play in this band anymore." We had one more gig to do at this club in Boston. It was where we were supposed to sign our record deal with Warner Bros. Originally, they were offering us six figures. In 1972, that was an enormous record contact. It was a lot less by the time we signed. We couldn't decide on anything. The longer it took us to agree on something, the more the record companies saw us as a high-risk band. I just stayed out of it: "You guys do what you want to do and I'll sign." Eventually I just gave up on the whole thing. Things were really tough around that time; a girl killed herself at the house we (The Modern Lovers) lived at. I didn't see any future in the band so I quit.

I kept in touch with the guys in the New York Dolls. Sylvain and John lived in the same apartment. They always roomed together and I'd visit them. I went to see the Dolls play in New York a bunch of times. Whenever The Dolls would play up in Boston, John and I would disappear, go get high, and play a bunch of Eddie Cochran songs together. That's just what we did. He let me know without actually saying it that a big change was coming soon to the New York Dolls. Sure enough, Jerry (Nolan) and John left the band midway through a tour. And then I got a phone call. John asked me



Billy Cole and John Felice | Lindsey Anderson

to come down and audition for this new band he was starting with Jerry and Richard Hell. John needed another guitar player. We both had the same tastes; we had played together a bunch and he knew I could do the shit he wanted to play.

I got down to New York on a Friday night after working the whole day. I jumped on the train at South Station here in Boston and went straight down to New York City. It was a really hot Memorial Day weekend. I didn't sleep the entire time I was in New York. To say that we pushed the envelope that weekend is a huge understatement. We shot so much dope and got so fucking wasted. We practiced in a bathroom. It was totally crazy. I had the gig with The Heartbreakers. But by Monday morning I realized, "I've got to get the fuck out of here. If I don't leave I'll be dead in a few weeks." I knew John and I knew he wasn't going to stop. I knew that if I continued down that track it would have ended in disaster. I told John I had to go. He was bummed out. He thought he had his band. We practiced all of the songs on *LAME*. That was it though. My association with The Heartbreakers was just one crazy weekend. Seventy-two hours of straight madness.

Ryan: The Real Kids seemed to coalesce around 1976.

John: Yeah. By then I had already started writing the songs that would make their way into The Real Kids set list. "All Kindsa Girls," "Solid Gold," and "My Baby's Book" were written sometime in '75. As soon as I decided that The Heartbreakers wasn't going to work, I worked really hard on getting my own band together. (Original Real Kids drummer) Kevin Glasheen, who was my best friend growing up, we got together with a couple of other guys and decided that The Real Kids was going to be our focus. Kevin was happy that I hadn't joined The Heartbreakers. He knew Sylvain and John and what kind of life I would have been living in New York. I was still learning how to write songs. I wrote a lot of songs but also tossed a number away.

Ryan: "All Kindsa Girls" and "My Baby's Book" are incredible first efforts.

John: Those songs were written very early on. "All Kindsa Girls" still holds up today. Once you get a few tunes out, they start to come out at a pretty good clip. A lot of Real Kids standards were some of the first songs I ever wrote. It was weird how those floodgates opened.

Ryan: You nearly had a complete body of work right from the beginning.

John: It was totally unexpected. You've got to remember: The Modern Lovers was always Jonathan's band. I didn't mention this earlier, but there were other problems within The Modern Lovers.

The Modern Lovers all lived in a house on the beach, just south of Boston, where we'd also rehearse. When no one was around I'd start working on my own songs. It turns out Ernie (Brooks), Jerry (Harrison) and David (Robinson) liked some of the songs I was coming up with and wanted to play them. Jonathan had a real problem in giving up any of that territory. That's understandable. If someone said to me, "Hey, I want to start writing songs for The Real Kids," I'd tell them, "No you're fucking not! Go start your own band." [laughs] I got where Jonathan was coming from but it wasn't going to stop me from writing. If you've got songs inside of you, they're going to come out one way or another.

Ryan: The Real Kids have always been popular in France. But just how did the first Real Kids single "All Kindsa Girls" /

Poor
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were lost
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"Common at Noon" (1977) end up on a small French imprint, Sponge Records?

John: The French thought Jerry Lewis was the greatest thing since toilet paper. I've got to admit that being loved by the same people who loved Jerry Lewis concerned me. Philippe Garnier, the guy who did Sponge Records, loved us. He printed up one thousand copies of our first single. I don't recall where he heard us, but my best guess is he caught us in New York—probably at CBGB's. He decided he was going to invest some money in us. He was a writer for *Rock & Folk* magazine. Have you seen that publication?

Ryan: No, I haven't.

John: It was a super-slick, high-quality magazine. It would run incredibly well-researched, twelve-page articles on bands. I mean, I don't read French but this magazine was obviously heavy duty. I can't think of anything in the States that compared to it or even came close.

Philippe put us in the studio where we recorded "All Kindsa Girls" and "Common at Noon." That single is worth a fuck load of money now, if you can even find one. I don't own a copy of it and I doubt I ever will. I'll be goddamned if I spend more than fifty cents on a Real Kids record. [laughs] That single captured a moment in time. I don't know what it was, but the guy (Philippe Garnier) wrote this incredibly nice and very long article about us in *Rock & Folk*. I was impressed. I thought that would be it with the whole French thing. It wasn't.

Willie Alexander and his band, who were friends of ours—Matthew Mackenzie and Ricky Rothchild, both of them are gone now but they played with me and Billy (Cole) in a version of the Taxi Boys a little later on—they went on tour backing up Willie in France. Matthew and Ricky got back and told us, "You guys are so big in France. You have no idea. You should be capitalizing on this." Next thing I know, New Rose—who had worked out the deal with Willie to go over to France—started talking with us. Patrick Mathe was the main guy at New Rose.

When I think of France, I just don't think of rock'n'roll. Their language doesn't translate well to rock'n'roll, with the exception of Plastic Bertrand—but he was a Belgian guy singing in French.

Ryan: He was in Hubble Bubble.

John: Yeah, he kind of rocked at the time. It was a surprise to me that the French took to us as well as they did. When we did tour over there, they loved us. We were on radio stations and all that kind of stuff. Certain pockets of Europe really latched on to The Real Kids. We did well in Japan, Australia, and Scandinavia too.

Ryan: The Real Kids' self-titled debut is a classic. What happened around the time of its release? Did Marty Thau's Red Star go out of business before the planned second album could be recorded?

John: Our relationship with Red Star fell apart. Marty Thau's backing for Red Star dried up almost instantly. He put out

Suicide's album and then our record. After that, the people who put up the money withdrew it. There were no hard feelings; it wasn't Marty's fault and I never blamed him for it. We had to figure out what we were going to do.

Our first record had only been out for a little while and then we found ourselves without a label. Before Red Star went under, we had planned to do another record with them. The tracks that would have been on the second Red Star album are the songs on this new record (*Shake...Outta Control*). After the first Real Kids record, I played in the Taxi Boys. By the time The Real Kids got back together to cut our second album, *Outta Place* (1982), I had new songs that I wanted to record. All of the songs that had been planned for the second Red Star record got filed away. I'm glad that we were able to revisit them recently with (Ace of Heart's) Rick Harte (for *Shake...Outta Control*). I think Rick did a fucking amazing job.

People ask me about the first Real Kids record all the time. I have mixed emotions about it. I listened to it the other day for the first time in nearly twenty-five years. The last time I played it was when Norton reissued it (1991). I love the songs on it a lot. The production on that record leaves a lot to be desired, though. Nobody in the studio knew what they were doing at all. We didn't have a producer, per se. We were all just winging it. That's why I have a hard time with it, although my views might be a bit skewed due to personal prejudices to the way it sounds. But the listen I gave it the other day changed my attitude quite a bit. It holds up pretty well after all these years. I didn't hate listening to it. I was surprised.

Ryan: A lot of bands cutting records in the late '70s, especially on upstart independent labels, were given the same sort of treatment in regards to studio time: "Your session starts at midnight and you've got twelve hours to get it done."

John: Yeah. I don't think we would have fared any better had we signed to Sire. Sire tried to get us to sign with them. They were signing a lot of Boston and New York bands at the time. Like you said, they were just doing quickie, get-their-record-out-and-see-if-it-sticks sort of deals. That seemed to be their attitude. That's why we wanted to be on Red Star. They weren't Sire. We didn't feel like we were being used. I actually believed in what Marty was doing with Red Star. He had a vision for the label and I bought into it heavily. Had Red Star been given a chance, it would have been a successful label.

Ryan: I see where you're coming from with not wanting to sign to Sire. Ork Records is another label from that period that had incredible taste but died on the vine. The smaller indies had their ears to the ground.

John: Marty knew what he wanted. He had a reputation going back to the '60s for picking up great bands. He had worked for Buddah Records where he signed groups like the 1910 Fruitgum Company. If I thought anyone

was capable of putting together an interesting label, it would have been him.

I remember while we were cutting our first record for Red Star, Marty brought the B-52's up to New York from Athens, Georgia, to play a showcase gig. That would have never happened without Marty. He knew what was fucking good.

Ryan: Suicide and The Real Kids are two incredible bands.

John: And they're on the opposite ends of the spectrum. We played a couple of gigs together and it worked. Marty had the vision.

Ryan: Were The Real Kids on hold while you were playing in the Taxi Boys?

John: The Real Kids had morphed into the Taxi Boys and then we changed back again. There was no real difference between the Taxi Boys and The Real Kids. When we first started doing the Taxi Boys thing, Billy Cole played bass, Matthew Mackenzie played lead guitar instead of me, and Ricky Rothchild played drums. It was just a different approach to the same band. I didn't really change my style of songwriting. We did what we could do with the group.

Ryan: The second Real Kids record, *Outta Place* (1982), was released by a Boston label but was later picked up by New Rose, correct?

John: Dave Pierce, who ran a label called Star Rhythm, decided to help us out. He was a friend of ours who ran a record store. He worked out a deal with New Rose so that it would be available in Europe while he took care of the United States.

Ryan: *Outta Place* and *Hit You Hard* (1983) are both excellent albums that seem to be overshadowed by the self-titled record.

John: I have a problem with that. I'd be lying if I said I didn't. I don't think the first record is so great that it should dwarf everything else we've done. The first album is good but I think the other Real Kids records are good, too.

Ryan: "Senseless" on *Outta Place* is one of my favorite Real Kids originals. Your cover of the Everly Brothers' "Problems" is a great reinterpretation of the song.

John: Thanks. There's good stuff on those records. You just can't ignore them. *Hit You Hard* was never available outside of Europe. It was only available on New Rose. Their distribution wasn't all that great. With the Taxi Boys, we did an EP for Star Rhythm and an EP for Bomp! We were doing little one-off deals to keep busy and hopefully not get lost in the shuffle.

But like you said, things didn't turn out that way. Our records did get lost in the shuffle. No matter how hard we tried to prevent it, we couldn't stop it from happening. What can you do? I think that we produced a bunch of good work under the circumstances. The Real Kids never had a label with real backing, so we couldn't do much. We just kept trying to put one foot in front of the other, hoping to get the next record out. That was what it was all about. But getting records out became harder and harder to do as time went on. We did two records with New Rose: the live album (*All Kindsa Jerks Live*) and *Hit You Hard*. I don't

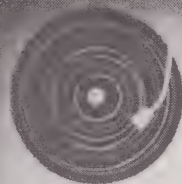


Billy Cole | Lindsey Anderson



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You can
rehearse
until your
hands
bleed;
it doesn't
mean
much.

think they were commercially successful. I would have liked to have seen *Hit You Hard* get more recognition. Instead it's treated almost like a footnote to the band, something that I really hate. I dislike that people have to search for those New Rose records, scouring for a copy on Ebay. That shit isn't available. "She's a Mess" (on *Hit You Hard*) is a really good song.

Ryan: "Where I Want to Be" is another great track.

John: Yeah. Again, there's a bunch of good shit on that record. New Rose couldn't get their distribution act together. It was very frustrating, to say the least.

Ryan: You've had bad luck with labels and distributors. Red Star went under. New Rose couldn't get *Hit You Hard* out in the States. And then with the Lowdowns record (1988's *Nothing Pretty*) you cut, I had heard that Ace of Hearts' distributor went out of business the week it was released.

John: The distributor went under right when it came out. The Lowdowns record sat on the loading dock, waiting to be shipped out with no place to go. We were surrounded by bad luck. That shit happened to us a lot. After the distribution mess with the Lowdowns record, I became really frustrated. It wasn't easy to take that one sitting down. It was particularly painful because we had put a lot of effort into making it. Of all the records I've released, that one is my favorite.

Ryan: Your catalog is solid the whole way through. It's a shame when good LPs don't get out there. The proverbial example of that is Big Star.

John: We're certainly not the only ones it has happened to. Hopefully things will change with this last one (*Shake...Outta Control*) we did. The record seems to be well received. We're not expecting anything earth shattering, but stranger things have happened.

Ryan: It must have been cathartic to finally properly record these songs. For decades they were only available as live tracks on *Grown Up Wrong* (1993).

John: As I say in the liners to *Shake...Outta Control*, hearing those songs on *Grown Up Wrong* was like chewing on tin foil. That was due to them only being available as live tracks. I wanted to get these songs done properly as I had intended to decades ago. Rick (Harte) was able to do that. We gained a bigger and better vision with him helping us. I was determined to make this record.

Ryan: As you write in the liner notes, a new Real Kids record seemed highly unlikely.

John: Absolutely. It'd been thirty years.

Ryan: What was the impetus to get these songs recorded? Was Rick the catalyst?

John: No. It was our idea. Rick came to the party late. We had already started recording it and we were in trouble with the people we had working with us at the time. We needed to find another way to get it done and Rick stepped in and saved the day. He was the right person for the job. Rick and I have something of a partnership. We had worked together about twenty-five years previously on the Lowdowns record. Rick and I are able to get

things done. We are on the same wavelength. I think we'll have a good future ahead of us. The next record is already in the works. And this time we will have Rick involved in the planning stages, whereas before he had joined when things were already underway. That's a comfort to us. Rick understands my music and what I'm trying to do better than anyone I've ever worked with. No one else has even come close.

Ryan: *Shake...Outta Control* is a great record. Everyone knew the lyrics to "Who Needs You" from the live version on *Grown Up Wrong*, but to hear it fully realized is a very special thing.

John: Thank you. *Shake...Outta Control* meant a lot to me. I finally got the material out there properly. "Common at Noon" was never recorded correctly. It was scheduled to be on the second Red Star album; "All Kindsa Girls" was on the first record and we were going to rerecord the B Side of the Sponge single ("Common at Noon") for the second record. The only songs on the new record that wouldn't have been on the second Red Star one are "Tell Me What You Want Me to Do" and "That Girl Ain't Right." "Tell Me What You Want Me to Do" was the song that we wrote for Mary Weiss that she recorded on her last album (2007's *Dangerous Game*). When you get a chance to hear the remix for the vinyl version (of *Shake...Outta Control*), it sounds incredible. Rick did a great job of mixing and mastering the album. "That Girl Ain't Right" is a newer song. We wanted to put something of a tease in there, a newer song to show people what's in store for the next album.


Ryan: There's also a Jonathan Richman cover ("Fly Into The Mystery").

John: That actually would have been on the second Red Star record. That was a regular fixture in The Real Kids set list. We covered that all the time, going back to the early days with Kevin Glasheen—before Alpo, Howie Ferguson, and Billy Borgioli joined the band. Looking back on it, I don't know how that song became a standard for us. But it was a lot of fun covering it for this record.

Ryan: The Real Kids have been active again. You've been playing around Boston a lot.

John: We're trying to. We're currently doing a month-long residency at a club in Boston, breaking in some new songs for the upcoming record. Nothing really tightens things up like playing it in front of an audience. You can rehearse until your hands bleed; it doesn't mean much. It's playing in front of people that really makes the difference.





Interview by Sean Arenas and Todd Taylor


Introduction by Sean Arenas

Photos by Dani Kordani, Shelby Fujioka and Jonathan Velazquez


Layout by Becky Bennett

Transcription by Justin George

Delay



Ryan—Guitar
Austin—Bass
Jesse—Drums



Playing in a band requires telepathy, a Jedi mind trick that bridges the fingertips and lips and impulses of different people all striving to craft a song. This intuition is none more strong than between twin brothers who grew up in a musical family, and a childhood friend whose laid-back family allowed their basement to become a practice space. You can hear the familial bond in Ryan and Austin's intertwined vocal harmonies. As young'uns, they sang in a high vocal register, almost falsetto, eventually growing into a breathy timbre. You can hear over sixteen years of camaraderie in Jesse's restrained, although pronounced, drumming, which accents the fuzzy guitar licks and warm bass lines. This is audible cohesion.

Delay's musical catalog is a snapshot of lifelong friendship, a testament to perseverance in spite of societal pressure to conform. Fit in. Give up. Just a few years in the muck, it's obvious that soul-sucking careers can sap creative energy and transform you into a lifeless husk. Yet, this trio has committed to the one thing that makes them happiest: punk.

Before you attempt to tap into their wavelength, strip away any saccharine preconceived notions associated with "heartfelt music." Forget lovesick posturing. Mumbled confessions. Hackneyed metaphors. Instead, be prepared for honesty, for absolute clarity, and for musical therapy. Tuning into Delay's wavelength reveals some of the daily bullshit. You might not recognize this new lingering sensation as sincerity has a way of sneaking up on you, but when it does, you'll wonder how you ever lived without it.



Sean: I saw recently you guys posted seven songs from 1999. Fifteen years ago is a long time for three young guys. How far back does the band go?

Ryan: The first recording Delay has is a tape that my dad helped us record and it's called *The First One*. [laughter] It says '97 on it.

Sean: Holy shit! How old were you then?

Austin: December '97.

Ryan: We would have been going into eighth grade. I don't remember how old you are when that happens.

Austin: Probably thirteen.

Ryan: We decided to start a band because of wanting to say you're in a band rather than the actual act of playing. [laughter]

Austin: You just want to say you're in a band and then eventually we decided maybe we should actually...

Todd: Put the effort in?

Austin: Yeah, make some music.

Sean: Was Delay the original band name?

Austin: Um. [laughter] I mean, it was the first one that we had any kind of settling on. Like, "This is fine."

Jesse: There were a lot of terrible suggestions.

Sean: What were those?

Jesse: I mean, my favorite terrible one, it's not that bad, was Jar. Just because it was Jesse, Austin, Ryan and it's a Green Day song.

Todd: Two birds with one stone.

Jesse: Yeah, we would have pigeonholed ourselves. [laughter] If we haven't already! Anyway, that was my favorite idea that didn't stick.

Ryan: Other than that, you're in eighth

grade, you're a boy, you probably thought of something stupid that you thought was funny—it's not funny.

Sean: How did you get started so young?

Jesse: Ryan and I were in first grade together, so we met each other when we were six.

Todd: Jesus.

Jesse: And they're twins, so...

Todd: So they met really early on. [laughter]

Austin: I don't know how I got involved other than what Jesse said, we're twins. I probably just invited myself over. Let's see, school band started in fifth grade.

Ryan: And Jesse was always cool as hell, so he picked to play the drums. He had a... what's that brand? Remo?

Austin: You better remember that; we're sponsored by them.

Ryan: You know, the little drum pad. Well, he had a drum pad and that's what we were using. We're going to start Delay 'cause here's a drum pad. [laughter] That will obviously lead to a set.

Sean: That's a foundation!

Austin: We were all in band, but me and Ryan's dad is a music teacher and he's played in wedding bands. He writes his own music. He still writes his own music. Everything from pop songs that are about my mom—which is sweet—to church music and some secular music. He wrote songs for our baseball teams growing up. If you were doing something, there's a song about it. I would say in our family that's the family trade. It was convenient that Jesse was also

interested in music, had a *Dookie* poster in his room, and had parents who were a little more laid back than ours. Not that our parents were against band practice, but definitely his house was the band practice place. [To Ryan] I want to say that Jesse's dad found the guitar for you?

Ryan: It was his.

Jesse: Yeah, it was my dad's.

Austin: It was an old Teisco guitar. That was part two to the drum pad. Then we collectively bought a bass. Yeah, that's kind of how it got going.

Sean: What was the first show?

Ryan: We had a singer at the time. It would have been in Kyle Tarr's backyard in a little development area called Longbrooke, which is kind of in Berea, Ohio. His parents let us play on their patio. It was a show with Social Distortion.

Austin: No, it wasn't. [laughter] That's the real band. No, their band name sounded like Social Distortion.

Ryan: Social Disorder?

Jesse: Yeah, that's what it was. It was Social Disorder. [laughter]

Sean: They could still be Social D.

Austin: We weren't supposed to play. We just showed up because we were like, "This is where it's at if you were kind of in, if you wore flannel." And we did, conveniently. So we showed up and we were really hoping that they would know we were in a band. We weren't going to plug ourselves, even though we will now.

Jesse: Somebody else was like, "Yeah, you should let these kids play a few songs." So



RYAN | JONATHAN VELAZQUEZ

we did play a few songs after Social... maybe it was just "Disorder," man.

Ryan: I can't believe I said Social Distortion. [laughter] It's buried in my subconscious.

Austin: We played after them, performing just a couple of songs. This is our first technical show. Then after that it was backyard shows, little seventh grade friend parties where it's like, "Yeah, our band is playing!"

Ryan: Jesse's mom's birthday.

Jesse: My mom's fortieth birthday.

Todd: Was she stoked?

Jesse: I don't know if she was stoked that we played. [laughter] She was really surprised that there was a party.

Austin: She had no idea.

Sean: That was a part of her birthday present.

Jesse: Right.

Austin: There was a bunch of stuff like that. There was always somebody there pushing you along. There was a guitar club in seventh grade. That was cool. There was the Berea High School Rock Off, which was actually very, very crucial in the Cleveland area. A lot of my friends that are in bands I know from the Rock Off.

Sean: What's the Rock Off?

Jesse: The Rock Off had a bunch of sponsors. Just imagine all the sponsors that would sponsor something like that. It was at the Odeon, a mid-size Cleveland club. You'd definitely see a punk show there. Their whole

staff was great. A bunch of our friends' bands played and you met a bunch of regional bands. It just seemed like the next thing was to start setting up shows at community centers.

Austin: Church basements. You meet kids and you're like, "We're going to drive... we're going on tour to Elyria." Which is only half an hour away. [laughter]

Todd: You still call it a "tour," though.

Austin: Yeah, well, we're going out of town to play somewhere else. That was the beginning. Then more business-savvy people would be like, "Hey, you should open the show for this band," or, "You should book this band at your community center." Then you realize bands tour and they're not much older than we are. That's kind of how that snowballed.

Ryan: That was a good summary.

Austin: Thank you. [laughter]

Sean: What sort of feedback was your family giving you at that age?

Ryan: It was not something that was said. It was mostly that they were allowing it to happen, whether that be playing a show in downtown Cleveland or something like that. Or just letting us practice. They were hands-off as far as being like, "You guys really rock!" [laughter] They didn't say much. They were just like, "It's yours. Do it." Especially Jesse's parents.

Jesse: Yeah, thinking back on it, we started playing together in my parent's basement

when we were in seventh grade until we went to college, so that's five years of us not knowing what we were doing.

Ryan: Pretty much took over that basement.

Jesse: We took over the back half of it. My parent's were totally cool with it because we would practice all the time. My brothers were not. They were like, "Oh, your stupid friends are coming over again, aren't they?" I was like, "Yeah."

Austin: That's us, we're the stupid friends. I just wanted to clarify. [laughter]

Ryan: We just won't go away.

Austin: I know Jesse's mom and dad were really encouraging and our parents were really encouraging. We didn't have an overzealous parent who was like, "I'm going to tell you which direction to take your band." They were always really encouraging and hands-on/hands-off enough to make it work. That's a lovely combination.

Todd: They facilitated it. They didn't give you advice like, "You need to get paid in more than cake." [laughter]

Austin: I don't think everybody is lucky enough to have that. My mom, for our birthday, got us tour snacks. Awesome!

Jesse: They were good! A whole jar of peanut butter filled pretzels.

Austin: My mom is so great, so shout outs to the Withers and Eilbeck families.

Sean: How do you guys distribute lyrics?

Austin: If Ryan sings, it's his lyrics. If I sing, it's my lyrics. On *Circle Change*, more of the songs are Ryan's, so they're mostly Ryan's lyrics. Usually, the song comes together and it's not until a while later that you're like, "Oh, I fully grasp what it is you're trying to say." It's nice 'cause it's not really finished in that way. It's always a work in progress until we go to record.

Ryan: You write it, you sing it.

Austin: We're all part of the review process to insure quality control.

Ryan: With some of our old albums, I'm like, "Damn." The things that I'm saying are hilarious. I feel embarrassed if I'm sitting by myself listening to it.

Jesse: Our quality control department needs a review. [laughter]

Todd: That's called learning. That's the great thing about being thirteen years old—you can have shitty taste in music. You get a pass!

Ryan: But it's less easy to be like, "I was thirteen years old, and now I'm thirty and in the same band." [laughter]

Sean: The lyrics are so frank. They're honest across the board. Do you ever have reservations about certain things that you say?

Ryan: When I think about the ways in which we've always written lyrics in Delay and now it being a little more fine-tuned, for me, the excitement of punk was always the urgency of what was being delivered to you, lyrics included. I don't know how else to do it—except to say something that has that feeling attached to it so it does resonate. Even though the words might be really simple, I want it to have depth to it.

Todd: So, to recap, you want lyrics to mean something? [laughter] It seems obvious but it's true.

Sean: Yet, it's a challenge to get yourself in a position where you feel comfortable saying things that might make you uncomfortable.

Austin: And other people uncomfortable. Let's say Ryan brings a song to the table, we all kind of have a vague idea of what's going on because we just don't play in a band together. We've lived together, we know each other's families. It's personal for all three of us. You're like, "Oh, I know what this is about." It's your artistic decision on how vague you want to make it and sometimes not vague at all. You're playing a song that people in the room know exactly what it's about. Sometimes it is uncomfortable. Sometimes I don't want to play a song once a day since I actually feel emotional about it. To me, that's a good thing, that you tie that much emotion to something. Some of the songs, it's not timely to play them. Or maybe it's really timely to play them because everybody can feel that. Maybe if your band rose to a certain size it'd be harder to do that, but we don't have that problem right now. [laughter]

The songs stay really intimate. I think we get that from my dad, too. When we graduated high school, my dad wrote a song about it. Then he wants you to sit down and listen to him play it. Our friend, Jimi Paine, is a very talented writer and artist, and he said something in a review that I really liked. I think he said, "You're going to think they're kidding about their lyrics." It was a little more articulate than that, but he was like, "They're not. They were saying exactly what they mean." I really appreciate that.

Sean: What do you guys find yourself doing outside of music?

Jesse: I work at a bar in Columbus, which is pretty convenient.

Austin: Name drop it. Come on, for them.

Jesse: It's called Carabar. It's really great, what they do. They've been going on for eight or nine years.

Sean: Are you a bartender?

Jesse: Yeah. They do free all-ages shows where bands drink for free and get paid out of the bar. It's the best thing when you're on tour. I get spoiled working there and playing there because you go to other places and they give you, like, three drink tickets. Like, "What the hell?!" [laughter] That's how it is everywhere, you know? Even having all-ages shows at bars is something that doesn't happen most places, because people don't even want to deal with it.

Austin: Sometimes I do sound at the Carabar. [laughter] It's like a circular thing that goes on: you play there, you eat there, sometimes you get to work there. It's been a really cool learning experience to learn how to do that. That's the job I do least, but I like it the best. Then I get to substitute teach sometimes at a high school. I work for an after school program through the YMCA that's in Columbus. It's mostly kid stuff, sport stuff, and music stuff. That's how I describe my life in three words. [laughter]

Sean: I work for an after school program, too. How's that relationship?

Austin: It's mostly middle school and high school kids. I love it. They don't believe that I'm thirty. They think I need a haircut.

Ryan: Your pants are too tight.

JESSE AND AUSTIN | JONATHAN VELAZQUEZ



Austin: Yeah, my nickname is Mr. Tightpants. [laughter] I wear the baggiest pants I have, but I like the job quite a bit. Great group of kids, great staff. It's fun, I love it.

Ryan: I worked at Columbus Public Library for a number of years and quit that to do the touring and recording that we did this year.

Austin: Against our grandmother's advice.

Sean: What did she say?

Ryan: [grandma voice] "Don't quit that library job!" [laughter]

Austin: She just throws it in when we leave.

Sean: Did that weigh on you?

Ryan: No. [laughter]

Todd: "Come on, grandma!"

Ryan: It's fine. She's a musician. I should have been like, "It's your fault I quit," but I didn't.

Austin: She quit her job to join a USO band, just to put that out there.

Sean: What does she play?

played saxophone and Ryan played trumpet. So... yes, yeah. [laughter]

Sean: There's no ska band that came from this?

Austin: No ska band, but there was a ska song. Everybody has a ska song. [laughter] If you think you didn't have a ska song, then you're lying to yourself and you're lying to other people. But she's real supportive and she likes the singing. She also wanted costumes, coordinated dance routines, and little bits where you have an intermission and tell a joke. That's her era.

Todd: Can you ever do that for her next birthday?

Austin: We've had to do those types of things for her. If we took all the advice that my grandma gave us about being in a band, we'd probably be famous. [laughter]

Sean: That's another level of performance.

Austin: Say we get to the show and we hand

our money and editing skills in for writers predominantly from the Midwest area who we think are valuable in some way. They'll tour, like a band tours. We'll try and get people to sell it, like you might walk up to the record store and be like, "Will you buy it wholesale? Don't make me sign any papers, I just want to go."

Todd: When did you guys discover punk? Because it was a different world during the early to mid-'90s.

Austin: You could walk two miles from our house in Berea, Ohio to The Shop. You could walk there and get the new Arrested Development tape. These cassette tapes were like \$10.99, right? Then you throw in there a Nirvana's *From the Muddy Banks of the Wishkah* CD and then you found *Kerplunk!*. They just had what everybody wanted at that time and to us it was, "Oh my god." But it was probably happening everywhere because



I was thirteen years old, and now I'm thirty and in the same band. [laughter]



Ryan: The trombone.

Todd: Did you throw it in her face when she said that?

Ryan: No, I don't know if you've ever tried to do that to your grandmother. [laughter]

Austin: She's a supporter, too.

Ryan: Now I work at Used Kids Records in Columbus. They were like, "Go, do your thing." That's awesome because it's a great record store truly about getting people good music. I feel really comfortable there with all the weirdos.

Sean: Has your grandmother seen you guys perform?

Austin: Yeah.

Sean: What does she make of it?

Ryan: She's a little more honest. She does not understand what's happening musically at all.

Todd: Did she say, "More trombone"? [laughter]

Austin: She does wish we would use our more classically trained instruments.

Sean: Were you guys classically trained in other areas?

Austin: You know, we were just in band. We took some private lessons here and there. I

out dance booklets. You go around the room and you have to sign up for three dances with somebody, because that's what they did when they played. You would remember that show: "This person came up here and I had to sign their dance book. The third song the band played I had to dance with this person." [laughter] She even was like, "Here's an example of a dance book. Here are the three dancers I had." I'm like, "Wow!"

Ryan: People would probably be drinking more at shows like that. [laughter]

Sean: People would need a lot more social lubrication.

Austin: "I'm going to have to do the foxtrot. I'm going to finish this first." [laughter]

Sean: Ryan, what's your relationship to writing?

Ryan: I've always done poetry. Sometimes short stories or essays. Little bit of music writing. I'm part of a publishing collective that's called Monster House Press. We do mostly poetry releases.

Sean: How does that work?

Ryan: Kind of the same as the band works: You just lose money. [laughter] We will put

during that era every town could have a small shop that sold XXL *Insomniac* T-shirts and Cranberries CDs. We were there and that's where we got our stuff. It was curated for us by popular culture and by this store, and I think they did a nice job. [laughter]

Todd: How did that filter into finding a DIY punk community?

Austin: I think as far as DIY punk is concerned, the more you get out there as a band the more you meet other people. We started being asked by either promoters or bands from out of town to book their shows. So we started playing some of those shows, the ones that our friends would help host in the neighboring suburb or community center. Most bands seemed to like it. Conversely, we would go and support a band and they would make you sell pre-sale tickets and start before the doors are opened. You're all excited and you got your heart broke. It was very easy to turn away from that early on and be like, "We'll stick with community center shows." Eventually your name gets out there. The most memorable show is at this community center that we started booking at



WITH KNOX AUSTIN | SHELBY FUJIOKA

If we took every advice that my grandma gave us about being in a band, we'd probably be famous.

through neighboring friends. We got to book The Observers.

Todd: Oh, hell yeah.

Austin: Within the same month, The Modern Machines and The Ergs! came. It was just people who were a year or two older than us, and they were touring in this way we could relate to. It was like, "Oh, we're already doing this on a regional scale." That connected us to DIY.

Ryan: And those people, those bands weren't just everyday people. It seemed like it to us at the time—but you're meeting Mikey Erg, you're meeting Nato Coles...

Sean: Talented people.

Ryan: And they are encouraging you and they also have this additional amount of character that just sticks with you and inspires you. They're people crazy about music and about punk and they still do it.

Todd: It's like what you were talking about with the lyrics. There's additional stuff that's not immediately apparent.

Austin: Definitely. Those shows are really memorable for us in the way of like, "This is how you do things." Also, it helped us understand the unnecessary things that bands do. Or that you might feel like you're supposed to do. You can forgo those things and get the immediate enjoyment you're looking for in a band. So, in light of that, we all committed to the band pretty hard and decided we all would go to college together, which we did. [laughter]

Sean: Where did you go to college?

Austin: We all went to Ohio State.

Ryan: The Ohio State. [laughter]

Austin: My bad. [laughter]

Sean: Did you guys dorm together?

Austin: No, but we lived in the same dorm building. We were really trying to be our own people. [laughter]

Sean: Live a few doors down.

Austin: Yeah, we could have roomed together, but give us some credit.

Ryan: Jesse lived around the block in another dorm. The way we practiced was by taking the moving day crates and filling it with our

equipment, carting it down the street around the block, putting it on an elevator, and going down into this dorm called Baker, which had a drum set.

Jesse: For some reason, I was in the music dorm, so they had these soundproof rooms in the basement. But nothing on the application I filled out had anything to do with that. They had a really shitty drum set in a room that could only fit a drum set. One person would stand in the room with me, with the two amps, and somebody else would stand outside with their cord running under the door. That's how we practiced for a year.

Ryan: If you put your head on the door, you could hear what was being played. [laughter] That year we got to move to a big city. We know that bands tour through Columbus because we've been there to see shows at the bigger clubs. We started getting on pop punk shows at this dive bar called Bernie's. We played with Dirt Bike Annie and Clorox Girls and stuff like that.

Austin: The Copyrights. We had this reference point of DIY bands that toured through the Cleveland area right before we moved, and then we were meeting these other bands that were doing it in a very similar way. That summer Jesse's dad was nice enough to help us get a van.

Sean: What year was this now?

Ryan: This is 2004.

Jesse: That was our first tour.

Ryan: The van was \$1,800. We bought it with our own money. Me and Austin were not allowed to go on the tour, but then it was too late because we had booked the shows.

Austin: That's where our parents diverge. Jesse's parents, like I said, are a little more laid-back. My parents are really awesome, but it needs to make sense to them for you to make this decision that's really...

Ryan: They're protective.

Austin: We booked these shows and we were like...

Todd: "Let's go."

Austin: Yeah! We were out in the world,

doing our thing. It wasn't like a big freaking thing, you know?

Ryan: It's not like we're driving off, middle fingers in the air! [laughter]

Todd: "Fuck you, mom!"

Austin: It was more like, "Let's sit down and talk through it."

Jesse: "We're going. We booked it already!"

Austin: I think they were convinced that we did, in fact, put it together. We had all the directions atlas'd out. [laughter]

Sean: And the van had no issues?

Austin: No, it didn't give us any issues.

Jesse: Not that time.

Austin: Yeah, not that time!

Jesse: The door wouldn't shut. [laughter]

Austin: But it ran. You talk to any band and you're going to get good stories and shitty stories. We can join that. You go on that tour and you're like, "I'm absolutely hooked." You're in school trying to learn about what profession you might have....

Sean: What were you guys studying, anyway?

Ryan: I would study fake stuff. [laughter] English.

Austin: I studied Physical Education, which I did teach for three years.


Sean: So that worked out!

Austin: I would teach PE again.


Jesse: I did early childhood education.

Ryan: Working with drunk people at a bar. [laughter]

Austin: You know, you get hooked on touring and you're learning about things you're legitimately interested in. You're learning about being critical, you're learning social justice. You're learning all these things, which literally made my head explode. It also made it extremely hard to finish college. You realize all the options that you have, but at the same time, you realize all the privilege you have. We decided we're going to see that through and keep the band as part of our lives. And that's what we've done. We've gone on tour since then until now. It hasn't stopped. When people ask if you're still in the band, it's like, "Are you still eating three meals a day?" [laughter] For me, the answer is,



For me, the excitement of punk was always the urgency of what was being delivered to you, lyrics included.



“Yeah!” I’m actually offended when people ask me that. It’s just as defining as anything else in our lives.

Todd: How do you see the music differently now compared to years ago? As a listener, *Circle Change* is a more somber record and it’s a beautiful record, too. It also has more space. Pop punk can get so fevered that there’s no breaks. It’s just song, song, song, song, song. It’s nice to be able to actually live and breathe inside of songs and music.

Ryan: Jesse breathed in and we were like, “Jesse, are you going to say something?” [laughter]

Jesse: No.

Ryan: Here’s the thing: I’m going to talk about Jesse. The way that he plays drums on the album is very dynamic. Also, he started to do different things with tempo. In the drumming, there’s tons of space. There’s one song on the album where he hits the cymbal maybe once. As me and Austin are bringing these songs to practice, him playing in this way automatically set this tone of more dynamics and more space. We’re actually playing together and listening to each other and trusting that each person is doing the “right thing” for the song. I feel that shaped it.

Jesse: I read Neil Young’s biography, *Shakey*, and throughout the whole thing he talks a lot about his recording process and how he gets a lot of shit for Crazy Horse being really bad. You know, just being the worse band in rock’n’roll because they’re not very good, but that’s what makes them good. He said something like, “Less is more.” It’s something that has stuck with me the past three or four years.

Especially playing the drums; just because you’re being really flashy and doing a bunch of crazy shit doesn’t mean you’re a good drummer. You see that on every tour we go on, almost every show. You’re watching a drummer and they’re doing all this and

you’re like, “That’s cool, but it sounds really bad.” You’re just not good at doing that. [laughter] You’d probably be a lot better if you do half of what you’re trying to do. Young says something like, “You’ve got to play what the song wants, not what you want as a musician.” That’s the most important thing anybody could ever hear when you’re playing music and recording. It doesn’t matter if you want to do this guitar solo, because if it doesn’t fit, it’s going to ruin the song.

Todd: You’re not only listening to one another but trusting one another. That can be scary.

Austin: Ryan and Jesse play in other bands, too. Jesse plays in a band called All Dogs, Ryan plays in Blue Friction, and both those bands range from slightly different to very different from Delay. There’s more to pull from, there’s more talent that they’ve learned from playing other songs. Just being the person in the middle that puts the bass part to their stuff, I think to myself, “Oh, they wouldn’t have done that before.” Now they have this larger pool of skills to pull from and I think that really informed the new record, too. I go see their bands and I enjoy it and then I get to reap the benefits of their talent growth. [laughter] From a musical standpoint—for all the music nerds out there paying attention to that stuff—we tune down all the time for our voices’ sake, so we’re singing in a more comfortable range.

Sean: When you start growing as a songwriter, you learn how to play to the capabilities of your voice rather than trying to sing to some expectation.

Austin: We go on tour once a year. I want it to sound good. We’re bringing it, but I can’t sing that high anymore. It sounds bad. Just like there are decisions that you literally learn by doing and from talking to other people who are willing to give honest feedback: “Yeah, it seems you lose your voice every show.” “You’re actually right.

Thank you for telling me that.” It’s hard to give people that advice.

Todd: Also, you started when you were pre-puberty, too.

Austin: That’s too bad. I wish I could sing that high. [laughter] I miss it bad.

Sean: How has playing in a band together shaped your relationships with each other? That’s a drastic amount of time to spend both as friends and creatively together.

Jesse: I feel like we don’t spend as much time together.

Austin: I think that’s fair.

Jesse: We all kind of do our own thing now. You’re like, “Okay, we’ve known each other for, what, twenty-five years?” It’s the same way you do with your siblings, you’re like, “Okay, we grew up in this house together, we go apart.”

Todd: You can also pick up conversations just like that.

Austin: The nice thing is you can count on it, in the same way you know the holidays are going to come around with your family and their birthdays. We know tour is going to come around. We know that we are going to want to play a show. We know we want to have a creative idea to share with each other.

I think the space in our personal lives that we’ve given each other is good, because then it makes the band more fun since you’re counting on it. They go out and play in other bands; you go out and see new bands that you might not have gone to. I think you just get better at being a person, a better musician, a better everything. I think it’s nice to have the consistency of the band to come back to. That’s from people holding us to it. You get asked to play a show and people are like, “Will you guys hang out together and play?” We’re like, “That’s a good idea! It’s about time. Let’s do it.” [laughter] I appreciate that.

Ryan: It makes us more patient and aware that things will change always: the band, your



RYAN | DANI KORDANI

life. You can do whatever you want after the change happens and we just play in Delay.

Sean: What have you given up in your personal lives by pursuing this punk band?

Jesse: A lot of money. [laughter] When playing in a band, you're like, "Okay, I am going to work this part time job." I'm not going to pursue a career...yet. I'm going to work this job that's either going to let me have time off whenever I want or you're going to be like, "See ya!" I'll get another minimum wage job when I get back. You work really hard when you're home, save up money, and then you spend it all on tour. It sucks when you're talking about money, but it's a real thing, especially when you're touring in a DIY way. I mean, it doesn't matter as much when you're eighteen or nineteen but when you're turning thirty you're like, "Oh yeah..."

Ryan: We made twenty-four dollars at the door and that's how much we personally spent in the day.

Jesse: Each of us spent that. It's just like, "Oh, money is a real thing." The more adult you become, the more aware of it you are.

Austin: I definitely come at it from a perspective of feeling very privileged to get to make the choice to be a touring musician. I'm certainly lucky enough to have flexible jobs. I do have a teaching certificate, I can substitute teach. That's really lucky. The money thing is crucial but it's more about trying to balance the fact that you would have done it at a loss for quite a long

time. You do want to continue to have that attitude where it's like, "Yes, we will do this no matter what."

Austin: It's a delicate balance. Luckily, the band enhances my life all the time.

Sean: It's really about what you gain from it.

Austin: Totally! If I had to give anything up, it's the mental comfort with what you're doing. Because we do straddle that line and I think that we'll continue to do so for a long time. I think it keeps you sharp, keeps you reading about shit, and wanting to talk about it. A couple of our friends have recently gone on some really big tours, like Saintsenecca and The Sidekicks. I'm just like, "Please report back to me about the fact that you just became an LLC (limited liability company) or the fact that you are claiming your money as a band. I want to know what you are doing." I'm so interested. I think the sacrifice is you're always questioning how you do it and what you're doing. I'm pretty okay with that discomfort.

Ryan: I'm just going to say stability. When is the last time that I have lived in a room for longer than "this" amount of time? When have I had a job for longer "this" amount of time or been in a relationship for longer than "this" amount of time? Or any of that stuff. It's like a roller coaster where you'll be like, "Man, I've got this vision, I'm going to get a nice truck. I'm going to get my own apartment." Then, all of a sudden, I'm living in a three bedroom with four people and two cats. The radio is blasting and the dishes are

stacked up again and I'm like, "Fuck, man! How did I get here?!" [laughter]

Austin: There's a little bit of solidarity in that and a little bit of pride in getting through that. It's a narrative that I think at least the people in this room and your readers know.

Ryan: It's very romantic. [laughter]

Sean: It's a compulsion, really. I've heard it countless times: "If I don't pursue music, I'll be unhappy. If I don't, I'll feel crazy." I find it interesting that the tradeoff is always a stable financial situation. I could go the careerist route and take that potentially stable financial lifestyle, but will I be any happier for it? Whereas, in talking to people like you, whether it's conscious or not, you're like, "I'm going the route that's going to make me happiest."

Jesse: Those conversations people have all the time—to have gone that careerist route and be like, "Oh! You've gotten to travel for four months this year? That's crazy. I would give anything for that." That person can't even comprehend having less than twenty thousand dollars in their bank account. I start to stress when I get under seventy-five dollars. [laughter]

Ryan: Yesterday, we were in the car for nine hours, with the people I've known the longest and the joy of the day was this moment: I was taking a poop at a nice rest stop and the doors were meant to look like an old western prison. It had it so you could look out with your eyes. Man, if I could see that again! I'd drive as far as I just drove. To think that this

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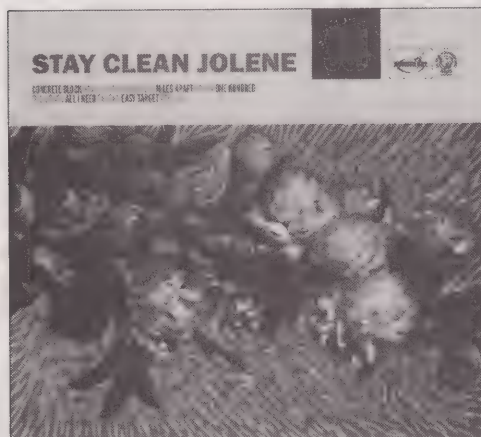
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is a memorable part of the day, while the hard parts are driving nine hours to play for nine people. You're constantly reassuring yourself that this thing you're doing has some value to it.

Jesse: It's the bathroom stall door; that's what's keeping you going. [laughter]

Sean: What are more moments like that?

Jesse: Our friend, Lew, who we've known for eleven years...

Austin: He was on that Ergs! tour.

Jesse: I haven't seen him in like four or five years. And he set up our show on tour and played our show and I was like, "This is great." When we're in Portland, one of our friends who moved there from Columbus, it's her birthday and that's going to be so fun. We get to be there for our friend's birthday who moved the entire country's length away from us. But we'll be there and get to hang out. Those are the moments that are worth it.

Austin: I get really satisfied when other people notice how good you've got it. It was recently that my dad was like, "Man! You guys got your own thing. You guys got it figured out." [laughter] We were actually talking about heavy stuff. We were talking about marriage and children. He was kind of acknowledging the fact that, in a way, we have some of the same sentiments.

Because we had some serious stuff happen with our friends, and I think my dad was just really happy that everybody in that group responded to this friend's challenge. He sees that he responds to those kinds of challenges in our family. He's like, "You're not missing anything. You have your family, it's just different." That's the songs, the connection to it, the whole music thing. For some people, it's a hobby, but I'm like it's just not a choice. Just like my dad has our family and my mom and everybody, we have our own little family of people who we look out for. It does go beyond music. It's a good thing.

Ryan: Tour is probably the only time in my life that I've felt like I am truly a free man. The window's open, the hair is blowing in the wind. If I was a regular smoker, I would be smoking eight cigarettes at once. That feeling right after the rest area door. [laughter]

Sean: That was a good day then?

Ryan: Me and Austin got those famous date shakes in Dateland, Arizona. We cheers'd that Styrofoam and drove into the fucking desert. I was sipping it and in my head I was thinking: "Hell yeah! I'm truly as happy as I'm going to be today." That happens on tour, but pair it up with the day where you're like, "Man, what are we doing?" [laughter] Turbulent joy.





No Small Children



Lisa Parade—vocals/guitar
Joanie Pimentel—vocals/bass
Nicola Berlinsky—drums

Introduction by Alice Bag
Interview by Alice Bag and Todd Taylor
Transcription by Genesis Bautista and Andrew Wagner
Photos by Angie Skull Garcia
Layout by Becky Bennett

I had never heard of No Small Children but I had seen them earlier in the evening, walking around the club in matching dresses that made them look like a time-warped, twisted, Converse-wearing, Andrews Sisters.

I was really looking forward to watching No Small Children's set, but as I was milling around the front of the stage Amy, my drummer and She Riffs bandmate, came up to me and said "Let's get together for a quick meeting." My plans to catch the band were thwarted.

So, the first time I heard these ladies I was in the middle of a band meeting. I was sitting in a quiet booth at the club when No Small Children started playing. "This band is really good," I interjected in the middle of our discussion. Amy nodded agreement and continued talking about band business. I sat in the booth, distracted by the sweet sound of their harmonies, soulful vocals, and music that made me want to move.

My band and I went back to Phoenix and it would be over a year before I'd have a chance to catch No Small Children in concert. This time, I was struck not only by their musicianship but by how well they engage an audience. Lisa and Joanie are a powerful pair of front women. They're charming enough to pull you in, but don't let the sweetness fool you—these women rock hard. Their songs are well-crafted, mostly punk, though some veer towards heavy metal, while others are full of catchy pop refrains that will have you singing along. The glue holding it all together is the conviction and playfulness with which they deliver them. It's easy to see that they have serious love and knowledge of music that is never allowed to get in the way of the band's first priority: to have fun on stage and rock your night!

Other people were saying, "Oh, you guys are punk rock" and we're like, "Okay, I guess we're punk rock." [laughter] And then, next thing you know we're a punk rock band.

Todd: So there's a third person who's not with us.

Joanie: There is! That's Nicola Berlinsky, and she's our drummer. She's actually at Columbia University right now, studying in a master's program. We miss her dearly, but we'll be reunited soon enough.

Lisa: She only has seven days left, then she's done and has her master's.

Alice: Wonderful. You're meeting her back East?

Joanie: She's going to come back to L.A., and then fly back to the East Coast.

Lisa: Yes, we're going to do some work because we haven't played in a month or more. We play all the time when we're all here, like once or twice a week. We rehearse twice a week almost always, and then she's gone for six weeks and it's like, "Oh my god, we haven't played!"

Todd: And you two are sisters, is that correct?

Joanie: We are.

Lisa: Yes.

Todd: Putting in facts. Just putting facts together. [laughter]

Alice: So, Lisa. Parade. Tell us about your marching band experiences. [laughter]

Lisa: It's been unavoidable for me and "marching band" to be together. I'm not really into marching band, first of all, but, you know, you're in high school, and to do the jazz band and the other cool stuff, you have to be in the marching band. I did that and went Friday nights. I was kind of forced into it. Go to college and they say, "If you really want a job when you're done, you better take marching band so you'll get the job above all the other people who don't do it." So I took it in college.

Todd: That doesn't make any sense.

Lisa: I was miserable. It was so cult-y it was crazy. [laughter] I did need it. I got the job and I had to teach it, make all the drills and everything [laughter]. I go in the pep band. I got done with that. Then, my stepson is in the marching band. So my husband and I become the boosters for the marching band [laughter] and we're at every single thing. I think finally, for the first time in my life since like, sixteen, I don't have marching band in my life—and it's glorious. [laughter]

Alice: How did you jump from marching band to punk?

Lisa: With this whole music thing—it's crazy. You get put into some kind of track and if you don't have the self-assurance you just follow the track. I kind of followed this track, yet I never really fit in all the way, even

throughout college. Then I got out of college and I stopped playing the alto sax, which was my major. It wasn't like, "Oh, I'm done," it was more like I just didn't pick it up. I started playing drums more and it just felt good. Then coming into this punk scene where people just valued the emotional content that you brought rather than how fast you could play the scales or whatever, just seduced me. Then I joined a hardcore band—that was my first real band on drums. It was in Boston, when hardcore was crazy. Like, it was dangerous.

Todd: What year is this around in?

Lisa: When was that, Joanie?

Joanie: Early '90s.

Lisa: I was really in that scene, as violent and horrible as it was. I'm at school working with kids to prevent violence, and racism, and all this stuff; then, I get to these shows, and these people are beating the shit out of each other. I looked at it as me just trying to live the other side rather than walk in a line—living in these two worlds. So, then I started a punk band with my really dear friend at the time, just 'cause I wanted to start writing songs. She was a singer. We just asked everyone we knew, "Hey, you want to be in our band?" and everyone we asked: "We don't play." "Oh, that's okay. We'll teach you." [laughter] And then, next thing you know, we have this band and we got signed to Warner Brothers because of "The Hara," as Ray says it. We were just so visceral about it, and ever since then I've been a huge believer in that element of all music—teaching kids, whatever the music is.

Todd: What were the names of the bands?

Lisa: The hardcore band was called Big Wig, and then the punk band was called Heidi. We did a record for Warner but it was never released.

Alice: So Joanie, you're a cellist?

Joanie: I play the cello. Knowing a lot of other string players who make it their life's work to play that instrument, I am hesitant to refer to myself as a cellist. I love playing the cello, I love teaching the cello, but those who have that as their primary instrument dedicate a lifetime to it. I do love it, and it doesn't need to be anymore than that for me. I enjoy playing it very much.

Alice: How did you make the transition or how did she talk you into leaving your cello behind and coming to play?

Joanie: What's interesting is that most of my life I've been a soul singer—that's my primary instrument. I lived in Boston and stayed there when Lisa came out here and even though we

were on two separate coasts—we obviously have a lot in common—we remained close. I didn't play the bass until I moved to Los Angeles. About two years ago, I was working on a project with Lisa. We were going back and forth doing songwriting work and she had been trying to get me to come out for years, just the timing wasn't right. Then, I was getting ready to get on a plane to go back, and it's like eleven degrees in Boston. We're sitting out in her patio—it's seventy degrees and amazing. She says, "When are you going to bite the bullet and just move out here?" And I said, "You know, I think now might be a good time." [laughter] So I went back to Boston and I said to my husband, "What do you think about moving to L.A.?" He said, "Let's do it." The decision was as fast as that. We have grown children, but we had been empty nested for a while and have lives of their own, so we sold our house and relocated.

Lisa: We were asking a lot of people to be in the band, but she was our first one.

[laughter]

Joanie: At the time, they had a different bass player.

Lisa: It didn't work out.

Joanie: We'll just leave it at that. But she said, "Oh Joanie, I want you to come play bass. Can you sub on the bass?"

Alice: Oh, they get you like that! [laughter]

Joanie: I was like, "I don't play the bass. I don't know how to play." "Well, how fast can you learn? We have a bass in the studio you can borrow."

Lisa: I knew she'd get it quick.

Joanie: Yeah, I was like, "All right, okay."

Lisa: Look how beefy your hands are, of course you could.

Joanie: I have man hands, seriously. So, I just practiced a lot, a lot, when I first got it. It took me a little while 'cause my head still wanted to play strings for it, because I play an upright bass for teaching, and it just didn't translate. Eventually, I had to say to myself, "Just put everything aside and treat it brand new." It was very liberating to be brand new at something and to be up on a stage. When you teach music, that happens a lot.

Lisa: And also not be the lead singer. That's big for her.

Joanie: I also had to learn a new discipline because I was not at the front of everything at that point. It was a very large band that I used to sing for. I really started to feel like I was a bass player. Now that's all I want to do, pick it up and play it. I went from having no bass and no gear within a year to having



three basses. [laughter] And now, I'm always geeking out, "Oh, did you hear this new thing? It sounded so great." [laughter]

Alice: Would you ever play cello on any of your songs?

Joanie: Oh yeah, we've done that before. We did this campaign recently where it was ten shows in ten days. We did ten straight shows in a row, and you have to be creative—you can't just do the same show over and over again, so we actually...

Todd: Unless you're Bad Religion. [laughter]

Joanie: Which we're not. But I did get the chance to play cello, and that was really fun.

Lisa: We mixed it up. We did instrumentals where I played trumpet, all kinds of stuff.

Alice: Do you guys use effects?

Lisa: I am trying to get better at it. I have one of those things that you put all the effect pedals in. I got this thing that I won, so I had all these pedals that I was able to get.

Alice: That you won?

Lisa: I won the John Lennon Songwriting competition. [cheers]

Alice: Wow! And you were not going to say something about this.

Joanie: Pat, pat, pat this [patting Lisa].

Lisa: So the prizes, among some other things, were Boss pedals. I'm like, "Oh, cool! I guess I'll take that one, and that..." I just picked a bunch of pedals. I'm trying to get better at it. My husband—he says it all the time, which drives me and everyone

crazy—but he's like, "What's the cure for a bad snare drum sound?"

Alice: A good song.

Lisa: A good song! It's very true.

Alice: Did your husband help produce your records?

Joanie: He executive produced it.

Lisa: I did produce it, but he was there for me all along. Like when I didn't think the guitar sound was right, he would come in, we would play things for him, and he would suggest things. He mixed it, too. He has our back.

Alice: Yeah, that's nice.

Joanie: Lisa did all the heavy lifting, though. That's for sure.

Alice: As a mom and a former teacher, I interpreted No Small Children as describing an oasis, where there's no one to take care of but yourself. I'm talking about your name. I've also read an interview with you where you gave several possible interpretations of the name, but what does the name mean to you?

Joanie: Wow, that's a great question.

Lisa: Wait, will you read the start of that again? [laughter] Because I think you actually answered it better than we can answer it.

Alice: I said I interpreted it as, "an oasis, where there is no one to take care of but yourself."

Lisa: Yeah.

Joanie: Yeah, I think you pretty much got the...

Lisa: And I think you say, "Alice Bag said

it perfectly." Every interview from now on. [laughter]

Lisa: I think we're gonna quote you.

Alice: Well, I've been a teacher, so I know that nice feeling when you get into the lunchroom and everything is kind of quiet and there's adult talk.

Lisa: All right, it does have a lot of meanings. This is the honest answer. This was before Joanie was in the band—we started it 'cause neither of us have kids—Nicola or I—so we started this idea that we're gonna have this group that kind of just feels like they need each other to support each other. There are a lot of young mothers at our school. "That's all right, that's good, but this is us," and so we're like, "Let's have a band called No Small Children." And it was hypothetical—as I think at this point all good bands are—and so we started it with really a way of being there for each other.

It's kind of like all women are sort of wired—and maybe men, too—to go that way. It's this sort of thing you go through when you realize that you're not gonna be a mother. Once in a while this wave hits you where you talk to a person and you want to be there for them. So I'm walking by and I could tell Nicola was feeling it. I'm like, "Let's start a band! We'll call it No Small Children!" And she goes, "Yeah!" So, it's kind of me going, "Yeah, let's do something cool!" And then, I had another friend in the

East Coast, and she's like, "Yeah! I don't play an instrument, but I want to be in that too." That's sort of where it started it, but then Joanie joined the band.

I do have step kids that I adore, too. But Joanie joined the band and was the perfect fit for us. And she raised her son and our nephew on her own. So all of a sudden that doesn't work—that name doesn't work in that context—so it evolved. I felt like it was like a living name, you know what I mean? I started to feel that people who were mothers didn't feel included into what we were doing and we didn't want that either. Because you start to think that there are times when mothers and fathers feel so isolated and alone in their own place, and feel like we're the cool ones, you know? And we think they're the cool ones. So we just kind of thought of that. And now, it means exactly what you said. An oasis... [laughter]

Alice: Whatever it was.

Lisa: Yeah, whatever it was—an oasis.

Joanie: Everyone's oasis is something different, you know.

Alice: Right!

Lisa: Exactly.

Joanie: For Lisa and Nicola at the time—as women, there's a certain set of pressures and expectations that get put on you. When you are a parent, your whole life is about somebody else for a very long time. So even though our oasis is different, it's the first time—in, really, pretty much my whole life—that it gets to be just about me.

Alice: You met Nicola when you were working at the same school.

Lisa: That's right.

Alice: Tell me how you discovered that you had similar music tastes.

Lisa: It started with the mission statement before the musical taste. We just came together, said "Let's start a band," and started jamming.

Alice: Did she always play drums?

Lisa: She played percussion and ended up going into teaching to get an education degree. Then we just started writing songs, and just getting ideas in the beginning. It was more like we grew into each other.

Joanie: She started school as a musician. As a female drummer at the time, she became very discouraged and actually left playing drums for many years—almost twenty years, she said—and went into education because she felt it was her calling. Then she picked the drums back up to play in this other band.

Lisa: Corresponding Society.

Joanie: She's very much wanting to move forward all the time, which is great for Lisa and me, because she'll push us in the best type of way.

Lisa: It's so interesting the dynamic between us, 'cause we all really bring a total different piece to it where we push each other. It's really cool.

Todd: I just want to make a comment on the name. I didn't even think about this before. Tony Adolescent doesn't even play the song "I Hate Children" anymore because—well, because he actually loves his children.

Lisa: It's really meant to be sort of a joke

'cause we're teachers. And you're absolutely right. It's very important, we've had these conversations.

Joanie: We don't want to push people away; we want to draw them in. That's what we want our music to do. And also the message. One of the things that I love so much about this band is that we always want to get better, but also, we just don't take ourselves so seriously. In punk rock you see a lot of intense faces and grimaces. It's mostly Lisa and I making fun of each other on the microphone. We're so serious about having fun. It's completely genuine. I make mistakes and go, "Ooh, sorry. Oops" [laughter]

Joanie: We're not playing Mozart here. It's less about the precision and more about how it feels. I love that Maya Angelou thing: "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did—"

Lisa: It's all about energy.

Joanie: Stop it, Lisa. "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But, they'll never forget how you made them feel." Shhh. The one time I'm trying to be deep over here, she opens her yap. [laughter] It's all about energy—everything is connected.

Alice: So we talked a little bit about this—there's a soulful influence to your music. Can you tell me about your influences outside of punk?

Joanie: I've been a soul singer pretty much since I was about sixteen or seventeen.

Alice: Which artists, would you say?

Joanie: At the very tippy top, Aretha Franklin all the way, one hundred percent. I think I own everything she ever recorded. I've seen her live a couple of times. It's on my bucket list—I am really hoping to meet her someday. Aretha, if you're listening to this... [laughter] I love Wilson Pickett, Stevie Wonder, and just everybody in that genre. And also, love, love, love Ella Fitzgerald and that era of jazz music.

Alice: Is she on the Razorcake mailing list? [laughter]

Todd: Unfortunately, no.

Alice: Aretha is at the tippy top of mine, too. How about you, Lisa?

Lisa: I feel like I've been through a million phases musically. I feel like what my parents listened to was a huge influence on me. Then you get to high school and you listen to what all the teachers tell you that you should listen to, and then, the kids. I was into jazz—I was crazy about Miles and Coltrane. I went through a whole period of that. I was into Neil Young. I was into hard rock, like Nirvana, and Zeppelin. I was going crazy for that. But then, I was also into symphonic music like Holst. The Roots and certain hip hop. It's just so across the board. When it speaks to me, I don't know what it is about it that speaks to me. My collection is just so diverse.

Todd: With that in mind, why did you pick punk rock to play in this band?

Lisa: It was kind of how it came out, you know? For example, "Salad" was one of the songs, and I just wanted to throw up music. I love Les Paul guitars and I'm more right

handed than left handed with the guitar playing. I knew what I wanted the guitar to sound like. So it just kind of came from the attitude of it all. It wasn't like, "Oh, we're going to start a punk rock band." It was more like, "Here's a song, it sounds kind of punk rocky." Other people were saying, "Oh, you guys are punk rock" and we're like, "Okay, I guess we're punk rock." [laughter] And then, next thing you know we're a punk rock band. **Alice:** That song, "Salad"—I love that song. One of the things that I like about it is that probably every woman in the audience can relate—and probably a lot of guys. Are you concerned about the restrictive little boxes that women are put into, the way we have to present our bodies?

Lisa: That's what that song is about.

Alice: Can you tell me any more about it?

Lisa: All the songs that I write—now Joanie is starting to write a lot more for the band for the next record—but all these songs start with a title. So, right now I can tell you, I have like ten song titles with no song. Like, "I'm Okay, You're a Jerk," we wrote that the other day. And it's like, "I'm okay, you're a jerk." Everybody feels like that. Or "I Can't Say No" because you say yes to everything and you're just so exhausted, which is sort of based on one of my co-workers because she just says, "No" to every committee at work. So, it's like, "Aww, I can't say no." You write that down and just start singing the title, then it turns into a chorus, and then you structure a whole song around that.

Joanie: I can't tell you how many people have reposted links to "I Can't Say No" to their Facebook posting: "Oh, I wish I hadn't over-committed myself. This is my theme song right now." [laughter]

Lisa: Or when you're trying to get off your ass to go to work 'cause you're tired, so you get up slow, but you'll get up and persevere. "Drunk Creepy Guy," I mean that's a true story. [laughter]

Todd: No, really?

Joanie: Based on actual characters from real live shows, yes. [laughter]

Lisa: Exactly! "Oh, you need to write a song called, 'Drunk Creepy Guy.' Write it down." Like, "Baby, I Love You." I said, "Okay, you guys go home and come back with ten things that your husband drives you crazy with." They come in with all these things, so we take that and that becomes the lyric. Then you just gotta make it all rhyme up.

Alice: I love that. [laughter]

Joanie: Inevitably, when Lisa's husband comes to the show, she sings right to him. He's such a good sport about it, it's so great. [laughter] And it's like, "Honey, I love you even though this song is just for you," and he takes it. It's so funny. [laughter]

Alice: So, do people really call you wenches and bitches?

Joanie: We call ourselves wenches and bitches.

Lisa: They better not or we'll smack them.

Alice: All right, good.

Joanie: Let her rephrase that—she'll say, "You better not call us that or Joanie will

In punk rock you see a lot of intense faces and grimaces. It's mostly Lisa and I making fun of each other on the microphone. We're so serious about having fun.

smack you." [laughter]

Alice: In that song you also say you're kind of old. Do you feel like you're kind of old?

Lisa: I think that everybody feels like they're kind of old after twenty. [laughter]

Alice: Yes! After nineteen, I remember crying, "Ooh, I am gonna turn twenty!" [laughter]

Lisa: I think that as you get older, you realize that, "I can't believe I thought I was old then."

Joanie: I don't really feel any different than I did in my head then I did when I was a younger person. I think I'm probably a little better person than I was when I was eighteen. I still think the same things are funny. I still feel the same way about so many things. Honestly, this time in my life I'm enjoying so much. My age is almost irrelevant at this point. It sounds cliché.

Lisa: Alice, about that line too, I think that when that was written, it was more about that we're not trying to pretend that we're young. We are who we are and we're okay with it.

Alice: That's a great message.

Lisa: And fuck you all. [laughs]

Joanie: A lot of music is about owning where you are and where you're at. And not letting somebody else try to tell you what matters. When you just do it for all honest reasons, it attracts so many people. I think people gravitate to that, when you stop worrying about how you are perceived by everybody and just say, "I'm doing something really fun and awesome. You should come and do something fun and awesome with me, too."

Lisa: It's a party! [laughs]

Joanie: [in exaggerated Boston accent] It's a gnarly party!

Lisa: [in same accent] It's a gnarly party down by the harbor. [laughs]

Alice: How are we going to keep you here? You keep talking about Boston like you miss it.

Joanie: I'm not moving back East. I love it here.

Lisa: I have to say that it would be very difficult for me to move back at this point, mainly because relocating was such a pain in the ass. Obviously we have family back

there. I've lived there most of my life, so it's a hometown feel. Even though you may not necessarily live there again, you still always have that nostalgia in your heart for it. It's a great city. We didn't grow up in Boston proper, but just south of that city. I loved it. It was a great place, but I love it here too. You know what I love about this city? It's that unless you're from here, you come here from somewhere else. You're a person who gave it all up and came to L.A. to pursue a dream. You're this really unrealistic dreamer who is just a little crazy back there. But here you're just normal. [laughs]

Joanie: The only thing that would make living here perfect is that if my kids would move out here. No pressure, though. They have lives of their own. They all live in different cities anyway. Maybe one of these

days. [laughs]

Todd: She says, brandishing her fist.

Joanie: That's right. [laughs] On a mission.

Alice: What's the most important thing you teach your students?

Lisa: I'm trying to create music lovers for life. And I might be. I just try to help them find their journey.

Joanie: Journey. [laughs] It's all about feelings.

Lisa: But it's true, though. It's all about trying to make music lovers for life. That's it. Done.

Joanie: I've taught in really traditional classical environments before. At that point in time, I always felt a lot of pressure to just get my students to play the best they possibly can and be exceptional musicians with the hope that they would all grow up to be professional musicians. But I don't



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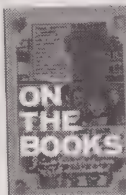
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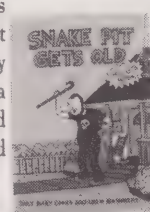
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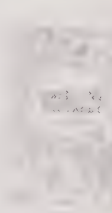
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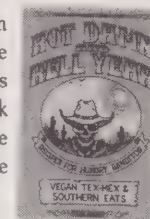
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**We are who we are
and we're okay with it.
And fuck you all.**

feel like that anymore. I really don't. It's more about what Lisa said, which is that everything they're learning in the classroom is—I hope—shaping an experience for them. Maybe they'll grow up to be an engineer. Maybe they'll grow up to be a musician. Maybe they'll be a gardener. I don't know. But I want them to be able to look back and grab some value from that experience, whatever that happens to be. Maybe it means something different for everybody but I hope that they will love music because of it, whatever the outcome.

Lisa: When I say create music lovers for life, that's the end-all. Because there are all these different things kids are doing. People get wrapped up in the rigor of it and you want to help them if that's the direction that they want to go, but also to not make them feel like shit about anything that they're doing with music.

Todd: What's one instance that you wished your sister wasn't in the band? [laughs] You can't get along all the time.

Lisa: Oh, that's pretty tricky. Umm.

Joanie: You're about to start a fight. [laughs]

Todd: It's the end, you know. [laughs]

Lisa: You know what? The hard part is just making sure that with Nicola—because we're sisters and we grew up together and we're so close—that we just always remain open, all three of us. And it always feels that way. The cool thing is that I honestly can say anything to Nicola and she might go...

Joanie: "Ah, fuck off." [laughs]

Lisa: And say something like that, but she'll come back. We always get back to the place where we're going to be.

Joanie: Yeah.

Lisa: So it's really not an issue. Yet. [laughs]

Joanie: We argue from time to time, just like any siblings would. Lisa and I spend a lot of time together. We're in a band together, we all work together, I teach with Lisa. I mean I've been mad at her and she's been mad at me. It's really short lived. We just kind of speak our piece and then it's over with after that.

Lisa: We lived in a very loud family where everything was out on the table all the time. I think there are families that aren't like that and it's really difficult—they keep things inside, get really resentful, and just want to leave.

Joanie: In general, I tend to be a very confrontational person. So very little is left unsaid. If I'm upset about something, I just will come in—with anybody, but especially with Lisa because it's easy—and say, "I'm mad about this," or "I'm upset about that."



She does the same with me and then it's over with after that. It prevents resentment from growing. You just say how you feel. Even when I'm mad at her I really can't think of an instance where I said "I wish I wasn't in a band with my sister."

Lisa: Aw, I love you. [laughs]

Joanie: It's all about feelings. [laughs]

Alice: No wonder she wanted to kiss you when she first got here. [laughs] You have a new record?

Lisa: It's a full length and we put it out in March. It's called *Trophy Wife*. Do you have it?

Alice: No, I have *Dear Youth*.

Lisa: As far as the production goes, in the beginning we were like, "We're only going to have one guitar track." We were just going to be really old school true to punk rock, whatever that is. Then on the second record we were like, "You know what? Let's add a few guitar tracks." [laughs] It got really fun and we developed it a little bit more. I love how it sounds.

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TOP FIVES

RAZORCAKE



Adam Perry

1. SPIT, *Poison in Your Head*
2. Lemuria, *Turnstile Comix #3*
3. Lagwagon, *Hang*
4. *Southern Bastards* (comic) by Jason Aaron and Jason Latour
5. *Bitch Planet* (comic) by Kelly Sue DeConnick and Valentine De Landro

Camille Reynolds

- Top 5 Things I'm Excited About*
- G.L.O.S.S. demo
 - Chao vegan cheese
 - Upcoming Quaaludes 7"
 - Coneheads tapes
 - N.O.T.S. West coast tour

Dave Williams

1. No Weather Talks, *Undoing Defeat* LP
2. Overcast, *Only Death Is Smiling* 3 x CD
3. Oh My Snare!, *Hoyeste Gang* LP
4. Turnstile, *Non-Stop Feeling* LP
5. Stay Clean Jolene, Self-titled LP

3. Quaaludes, Self-titled
4. Ty Segall, *Mr. Face* EP
5. Murder By Death, *Big Dark Love*

Jennifer Federico

Top 5 Kiwi Bands I Recently Learned about in New Zealand

1. Love's Ugly Children
2. Ghost Club
3. Emily Edrosa & Street Chant
4. Cut Off Your Hands
5. Clap Clap Riot

Aphid Peewit

- *Anger Is an Energy* by John Lydon (book)
- MDC, *Millions of Dead Cops: Millennium Edition* CD
- Dwarves, *Dwarves Invented Rock & Roll* CD
- United Teachers Of Music, *Annihilation of '77 7"*
- *The Worst of Eerie Publications* by Mike Howlett (book)

Chad Williams

1. Dictators NYC, live in SF!
2. CJ Ramone, *Last Chance to Dance* LP
3. Long Knife, *Meditations on Self Destruction* LP
4. toyGuitar, *In This Mess* LP
5. No///Sé, *Lower Berth* LP

Designated Dale

1. The Dictators at The Roxy in Hollywood, CA. One hundred percent bona fide NYC ass-kick that continues to hold its own. One of the best shows of the old guard I've seen in quite a long time.
2. The Humpers and Pagans at Alex's in Long Beach, CA. Midwest meets West Coast for a reunion of "FUCK, YEAH!" proportions.
3. The Ringleaders at the VFW Hall in Redondo Beach, CA. Larry May and Co. continue to bring the rock and fucking roll. And it is supernaturally good beyond belief.
4. Little Dave Merriman's *Odd Bird* album. If the song "Take Me In and Let Me Go" doesn't do it for you, find the nearest cardiologist to figure out what the fuck happened to your heartbeat.
5. *David Bowie: Five Years* documentary that looks at five of Bowie's most influential and illustrious years. Outstanding live footage and great behind-the-scenes perspective is crammed into one hour by your culturally-aware pals at the BBC. Excellent program; wish it was longer!

Chris Mason

1. G.L.O.S.S. demo
2. Dead Moon, live at Crystal Ballroom (PDX)
3. Legendary Wings, *Do You See?* LP
4. The Observers (sorta), Red Dons, Criminal Code, Piss Test, and Steel Chains live at Punx Haus (PDX)
5. Somerset Thrower, *Falling Swingers 7"*

Chris Terry

1. Dead Dog, *Precious Child* LP
2. D'Angelo, *Black Messiah* LP
3. Lydia Loveless, *Somewhere Else* LP
4. The Cars, *Greatest Hits* LP
5. Slowly reading *Moby Dick* for the first time

Art Ettinger

- Vanity, *Vain in Life* LP
- Red Death, Self-titled 7"
- Various Artists, *Come Alone to Holy Night Skinheads* LP
- Joyce Manor / Toys That Kill, *Split 7"*
- The Ladies, *Blow Your Mind* CS

Bill Pinkel

- The Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze*
- Black Lips, *Underneath the Rainbow*
- Blind Shake, *Breakfast of Failures*
- Reigning Sound, *Shattered*
- Rocket From The mutha-effing Crypt, live at Alex's in Long Beach!

Cahnie Galletta

My Top Five Live Shows in San Diego of 2014

1. Masked Intruder at Soda Bar. I still can't think of it without smiling.
2. Nato Coles at Awesomest. Amazing rock'n'roll that fills your heart.
3. Break Anchor at Soda Bar. Politically charged and full of energy.
4. Ronnie Spector at North Park Theater. She made me cry.
5. The Dwarves at Soda Bar. They are always such a great show packed with a good time.

Craven Rock

Kickass Things Experienced on My Shitty Poster Tour Jobby-poo

1. Ithaca Falls in winter
2. Smugtown Mushrooms in Rochester, NY (smugtownmushrooms.com)
3. My Momma's Kitchen in Virginia Beach
4. Fat Jack's Barbeque in Ithaca
5. Rocky Erickson, *The Evil One*

Daryl Gussin

- Really Red re-issue LPs! All three of them!
- G.L.O.S.S. demo
- Tim Version, *Ordinary Life* LP+7"
- No Love, "Dogs/Wolves" b/w "Bad Things" 7"
- Murmurs, *Bound* LP

Eric Baskauskas

1. Ajax 7"
2. Impalers, *Psychedelic Snutskallar 12"*
3. Old Man Gloom, *The Ape of God* LPs
4. Skemäta LP
5. The Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* LP

Indiana Laub

- Adventures, *Supersonic Home* LP
- G.L.O.S.S. demo
- Science Club, *Bad at Parties* EP
- Novelas, Self-titled EP
- Twin Pines, *Nice Guys* EP

Jamie Rotante

Top 5 Albums Currently on Frequent Rotation

1. War On Women, *War on Women*
2. Paul Jacobs, *Do It Again*

Joe Dana

1. Razorcake <3's Drinking Beer and Listening to Records' Bartender, Matt Dwyer, recording his comedy album at Bar 107
2. Vanessa Burgundy's sixteenth Annual Elvis Birthday Bash Luau at Burgundy Room
3. The Dictators at the Roxy
4. RVIVR, *Toys That Kill* at VLHS
5. Tülpis at La Cita

John Mule

1. *Bitch Planet* (comic)
2. *The Humans* (comic)
3. Saved by the bell hooks (tumblr)
4. *Sex Criminals* (comic)
5. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis (Answer: yes)

Juan Espinosa

- Melvins, *Ozma + Bullhead, Eggnog + Lice* All 2 x LP re-issues
- Volahn, *Ach'Ab'Al 2 x LP*
- Toys That Kill / Joyce Manor, *Split 7"*
- Gas Rag, *On the Beach 7"*
- Voight-Kampff, *Last House on the Right 7"*

Are Prisons Obsolete? by Angela Davis (Answer: yes)

Kayla Greet

1. Black Lives Matter
2. Turning thirty while watching Erica Freas from RVIVR at The Narwhal
3. Starting a monthly DJ set in Seattle
4. *Make It Might Ugly: A Handbook for Vanquishing Creative Demons* by Kim Werker (book)
5. Kepi Ghoulie gone country at The Victory Lounge

Keith Rosson

- New Junk City, Self-titled CS
- Teargas Rock, Self-titled LP
- Fugazi, *First Demo* LP
- 100 Apocalypses and Other Apocalypses by Lucy Corin (stories)
- *The Corpse Exhibition* by Hassan Blasim (stories)

Kevin Dunn

1. Little Dave Merriman, *Odd Bird*
2. Jabber / Mixed Tapes, Split 7"
3. Roomrunner, *Separate* EP
4. Ausmuteant, *Order of Operation* LP
5. Big Dick, *Disappointment* LP

Kurt Morris

1. Fugazi, *13 Songs*
2. Slayer, *Christ Illusion*
3. Sharon Van Etten, *Are We There*
4. Oil Boom, *Red Metal*
5. Propagandhi, *Supporting Caste*

Mark Twistworthy

- Really Red LP re-issues!
- Bluffing, *Sugar Coated Pills of Wisdom 12"*
- Küken, *Black Rose 7"*
- The Scrap Dealers, Self-titled LP
- Swami John Reis And The Blind Shake, *Modern Surf* LP

Matt Average

- The Flesh Eaters, live at the Echoplex, 1/10/15
- Expo 70, anything
- Glue, Self-titled EP
- The Sicks, *Pretty Plastic 7"*
- Vicious Pleasures, Self-titled EP

Mextli Hernandez

1. Cosmonauts, *Oh, You Know* CS EP
2. Lush, *Lovelife* LP
3. Davila 666, *Pocos Años, Muchos Daños* LP
4. Destruye y Huye, *Oscura Sociedad* EP
5. Catwalk, *(Please) Don't Break Me* Single

Michael T. Fournier

- Cometbus #56: *A Bestiary of Booksellers*
- Pile, *You're Better Than This* LP
- Screaming Females, *Rose Mountain* LP
- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home* (graphic novel)
- Reading with Sarah Gerard and Tim Horvath at RiverRun Bookstore, Portsmouth, NH, 02/03/2015

Mike Dumps

- Attendant, *Freaking Out 12"*
- Sheer Mag 7" EP

- Toys That Kill / Joyce Manor, Split 7"
- Rats Rest, *Hedonite 7"*
- Humanoids, Self-titled LP

Mike Faloan

1. Black Wine, *Yell Boss* LP
2. Todd Congelliere, *Wrong Side* LP
3. Kim Deal, *"Beautiful Moon" b/w "Biker Gone" 7"*
4. Rev. Norb & the Onions, Self-titled LP
5. Pharaoh Sanders & The Underground, Self-titled LP

Mike Frame

1. Sleater Kinney, *No Cities to Love*, CD and live
2. Lizzo and Caroline Smith, *Let 'Em Say*, song
3. Wilko Johnson and Roger Daltrey, *Going Back Home*, CD
4. *Chips & Beer* #8 (fanzine)
5. *WKRP: The Complete Series* (DVD box set)

Naked Rob

- The Grannies, *Ballsier* (SF Cross-dressing R'N'R!)
- Culture Abuse, *The Day Dreams of Nothing* EP (SF rotten punk rock)
- Sick Feeling, *Suburban Myth* (Brooklyn hardcore)
- Scalped 7" (SF hardcore/punk)
- Really Red 3 x LP re-issues (Houston, TX classic punk rock)

Nighthawk

- Moments at Dudes Weekend 2015
- Daniel James whipping his guitar with his belt during Indonesian Junk's set
- Two Houses covering "Dudes Room"
- The on-stage high-kick competition during Spruce Bringsteen's set
- Josh Goldman looking like a punk rock Jesus while playing with The Dopamines
- Lesser Apes' singer being passed out on a stage monitor during The Dopamines' set

Patrick Houdek

1. Getting to do a Top 5 for Razorcake
2. Having a photo page on the Razorcake website
3. '86 Mets House final show with Sass Dragons, The Brokedowns, Brickfight, and Rat Hammer
4. Ian's Party 2015 at Quencher's Saloon
5. The Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* record release show with Meatwave, Rad Payoff, and The Usuals at the Dutch Inn West

Paul Silver

1. Soulside and Swiz at The Black Cat, Washington, DC
2. RVIVR, Western Settings, DFMK at Til-Two Club, San Diego
3. Olivela, Deadbolt, White Murder, Uncle Joe's Big Ol' Driver at The Casbah, San Diego

4. toyGuitar, *In This Mess* LP
5. Iron Chic / Low Culture, Split 7"

Replay Dave

- 5. *Neighbors on My Shelf in the Early Ms*
- Magnum, Jeff
- Marginal Man
- Marked Men
- Mastadon
- Mathis, Johnny

Rev. Norb

- Duncan Reid & The Big Heads, *The Difficult Second Album* LP
- Loaded Dice, *No Sweat* CD
- Turnaround, *Let's Do It* CD
- Boys Order, *"Tomorrow Dancing" b/w "Danger!" 45*
- *FILMAGE* (DVD/ Blu-Ray) Hey, I'm in it!

Rich Cocksedge

- Violent Arrest, *Life inside the Western Bloc* LP
- The World/Inferno Friendship Society, *This Packed Funeral* LP
- Seminars, *Dreamcrusher 10"*
- Sleater-Kinney, *No Cities to Love* LP
- Boxkite 7" EP / Vlasta Popić, *Kvadrat* CD

Russ Van Cleave

- Shallow Cuts, *Storm Watch 7"*
- Blind Willie Johnson, *The Complete Blind Willie Johnson*
- John Moreland, *In the Throes*
- Your Pest Band, *Time to Go*
- Mcluskys, *Mcluskys Do Dallas*

Ryan Nichols

1. John Esguerra
2. Cross, *"Pyre" b/w "Repetition" 7"*
3. Billy Idol *Dancing with Myself* autobiography (book)
4. Ariel Pink, *Lipstick*
5. Cat Party

Sal Lucci

1. Cal And The Calories 7"
2. Midnite Snaxxx 7"
3. Electric Eels, *Die Electric Eels* LP
4. X_X, *XSticky Fingers* X LP
5. Nots, *We Are Nots* LP

Sammy thrashLife

5. Lateral Moves (new ex-Like Bats band)
4. Tinder January
3. News of a Rational Anthem / Murderburgers Split 7"
2. The Brokedowns, *Life Is a Breeze* (still)
1. My new girlfriend getting off drugs and quitting her shitty job

Sean Arenas

- Hurula, *Vi Är Människorna Våra Föräldrar Varnade Oss För* LP
- Low Culture / Needles/Pins, Split 7"
- Radioactivity, *"Danger" b/w "Why" 7"*
- M.O.T.O., *Chinese Rocks (Or a Fistful of Maobacks)* LP
- Joe Jack Talcum, *Home Recording's 1993-99* LP

Sean Koepenick

2015 Releases I Am

- Eagerly Awaiting*
- 1. The Bomb, *Axis of Awesome* EP
- 2. Noise By Numbers, *High on Drama* EP
- 3. Tenement, *Bruised Music Volume One*
- 4. Teenage Bottlerocket, *Tales from Wyoming*
- 5. The Hextalls, *Play with Heart*

Susan de Place

- Top 5 songs On Vinyl I Was Most Excited About Debating at the Last Razorcake <3's Drinking Beer & Listening to Records DJ gig at Bar 107 (From My Special All Female Fronted Bands Set!)*
- 1. Useless Children, "Haunted"
- 2. Sin 34, "After You"
- 3. Peeple Watchin', "Closet"
- 4. Kitty & The Manges, "Joey's Song"
- 5. Fuzzbox, "Love Is the Slug"

Tim Brooks

- Vanity, *Vain In Life* LP
- Lobster Killed Me, *Ghost* LP
- Young Conservatives LP
- Scalped EP
- Narcoleptics EP

Toby Tober

- Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed*
- 1. *What We Do in the Shadows*
- 2. *Filmage: The Story of Descendents/All*
- 3. *The Little Death*
- 4. *Inherent Vice*
- 5. *Ari Shaffir: Paid Regular and Passive Aggressive*

Todd Taylor

- Tim Version, *Ordinary Life* LP+7"
- LA Zine Fest (Extraordinary, all around.)
- Really Red re-issues
- The Gotobeds, *Poor People Are Revolting* LP tie with Steve Adamyk Band, *Dial Tone* LP
- Dorothy Allison, *Cavedweller* (book) tie with *Fuck and Fight* #5 (zine)

Tommy Vandervort

1. The Reaganomics, *Get Lost Stay Lost*
2. The Jetbirds, *Evolved Animal*
3. The Howl, *Jeune*
4. Derek Grant at The Beat Kitchen
5. Laura Jane Grace at The Double Door

Ty Stranglehold

- Top 5 Subhumans (Canada) Songs That Aren't "Fuck You" or "Slave to My Dick" (RIP Wimpy Roy)*
- 1. "Firing Squad"
- 2. "Death Was Too Kind"
- 3. "Behind My Smile"
- 4. "America Commits Suicide"
- 5. "The Big Picture"



1971: Self-titled: Cassette

While I felt like the band *kiiiiinda* noodled on too long in the majority of these songs for my personal tastes, there's no refuting that there's some real power here, and 1971 has, hands down, some of the most impressive lyrics I've read in some time. Smart, agile, and thoughtful stuff that seamlessly merges the personal and political. And if some of the songs work from a kind of odd and stumbling doom/punk amalgam, or even a manic, caffeine-heavy version of indie stuff ala old Crackerbush—who 1971 has almost assuredly never heard, so that's probably just me—that's okay, because when these guys are on, they are seriously on. I'm personally a fan of brevity as far as chops go, so this probably won't get a lot of repeat listens, but I'm sure there's plenty out there who'd go bananas for these dudes. —Keith Rosson (Faxed)

ACID BABY JESUS:

Selected Recordings: LP

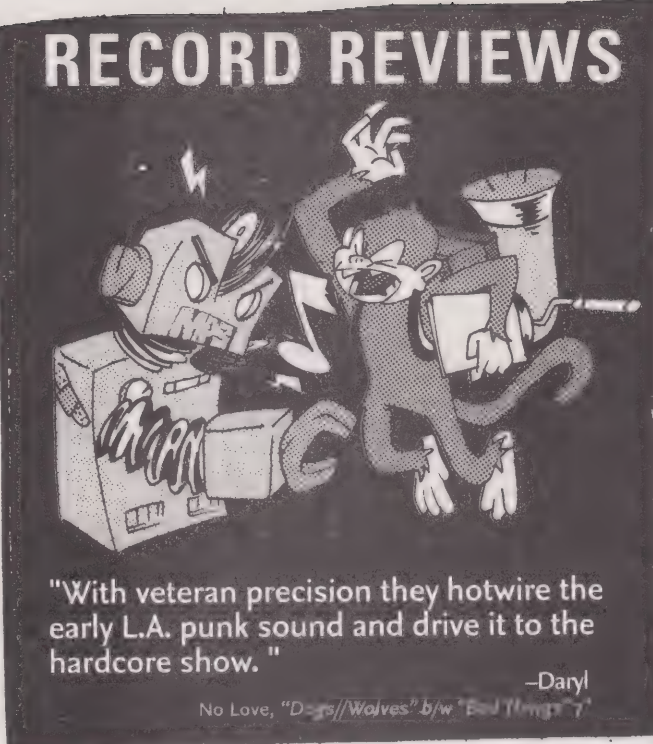
Psych rock is a bit tricky to pull off with any effectiveness. Lose your footing and you're sliding down a very slippery slope into a rather deep puddle of pretentiousness. ABJ are good at knowing where to go next, adroitly avoiding overt Pink Floyd worship while still recalling the heavily dosed experimentation of that band's early years and knowing that changing things up and throwing in a teensy bit o' pop can go a long way. "Head" music of fine vintage here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly)

AGATHA: *Gravis Atque Gravior*: LP

This is the Italian Agatha, not the band from Olympia, and they're a drums-and-bass two-piece, but with none of the ickiness that that implies. *Gravis Atque Gravior* (Latin for *Heavier and Heavier*) is a dark and brooding thing, riff-heavy and menacing, and, if nothing else, remarkable for its fullness of sound. This record sounds like a lot more than two people at work. Unfortunately to my uneducated ear, words like "stoner doom" keep coming to mind—they just have this tendency to ride a slow and singular riff into oblivion—but preferences notwithstanding, the band is certainly excellent at what they do. —Keith Rosson (Chaos Rurale)

ALIANS: *Gavroche*: LP

Want to learn more about Polish punk? I know I do. Here's a twentieth anniversary reissue of a classic, crunchy, Crass-influenced release from the 1990s. There's a lot of junky weird interludes, flutes, and accordions at work. But when it gets moving, it *moves*. The vocals are completely



fucking zany, and the fast breakneck speed is welcome when compared to the creepy bits between tracks. Pasazer is a label that specializes in fancy packaging, with them pulling out all the stops for *Gavroche*, including a cool foldout poster lyric sheet. Even the most peaceful of peace punks will want to break shit upon spinning this apparent classic, which is brimming with rage. —Art Ettinger (Pasazer)

AMEN: *Live 1992: 7"*

Straightforward hardcore punk from Poland, recorded live in 1992. Think Insted's sturdy beats fused with the berserker approach of Dutch hardcore heroes BGK. Despite being a live punk recording, the quality is most certainly top notch and holds up pretty well for being well over twenty years old. A live set on vinyl is not my preferred introduction to a band, but in Amen's case I'll overlook that minor detail. —Juan Espinosa (Pasazer, pasazer.pl / Stary Cap)

AMERICAN HERITAGE: *Prolapse*: LP

American Heritage was a long-running stoner sludge band with the Motörhead-meets-Melvins sound that was really popular in the '00s. This is their final release, and feels like a last gasp—six originals and three covers from a bulldozer of a band just starting to sound dated. —Chris Terry (Solar Flare)

APACHE DROPOUT: *Heavy Window*: CD

Eleven fuzz-drenched numbers straight outta Indiana are coming for your eardrums. This is not the next big thing but rather some reverberating heavy-on-the-backbeat, good ol' garage rock. It's got an especially murky, swampy quality that's pleasing to these ears, like The Cramps cleaned up to go to college or like an unironic Make-Up. Fun. A keeper. —Lisa Weiss (Magnetic South)

BAD NERVE: *Self-titled: 7" EP*

Another slab of clean-channel proto-hardcore worship from Umea here. Dual male/female vocals, punchy delivery, and attitude just oozin' out of its pores. Fuck yeah. —Jimmy Alvarado (Ny Vag)

BINGERS, THE: *Gonna Get You: 7"*

Night has fallen quicker than you expected. There's a fog rolling in. That fog looks the way the fuzz on this record sounds, like there's a good chance that you could get lost in it and never make it back. You drive into it anyway, because you've gotta escape. This is the perfect soundtrack—the B-side, specifically—which kicks off with the plaintive "Hideous Heart." The yelling seems distant. Maybe if you drive faster, you can get to it, and maybe it will have the answers you need. Or maybe not. Maybe you'll

just have to keep listening. —MP Johnson (Tall Pat, tallpat.com)

BLACK PLANET: *Betty No: 7" Flexi*

The flexi craze is really taking off. I mean, when Pirates Press got their machine (presumably the old Eva-Tone press?) up and running, I was intrigued like everyone else. After all, it's an affordable, interesting twist on a standard record. But I can honestly say I never expected to see so many. I suppose I simply presumed that people wouldn't be open to paying the same price as a seven inch for one of these plastic tampons, but what do I know. Apparently, people are into them, so that's cool. I'm still on the fence, but this here "Betty No" track by Black Planet is swaying me into the "yes" direction, since it's a great tune. Post-punk/new wave with female vocals, done strikingly well and enjoyable enough to dig deeper and track down other releases by this band. This is a picture disc flexi as well, I should add. —Steve Adamyk (Let's Pretend)

BLACKBIRD RAUM:

Under the Starling Host: LP

Pop quiz, class. Please circle the correct answer. *Under the Starling Host* is: A) straight-up, unabashed anarcho-folk. B) an excellent document to illustrate that Blackbird Raum will make a solid living as a post-apocalyptic marching band once the world's plummeted into a terminal ruin. C) showcasing a buoyant merging of Celtic, klezmer, and folk influences. D) similar in scope and tone to bands like Mischief Brew, Bedlam Rovers, Ramshackle Glory, and some of the Taxpayers material. E) a well executed record, if a bit of a muffled one. F) clearly a labor of love by all those involved, as there's new and wonderful full-color cover art by Joshum Hardy, as well as an accompanying color poster, insert, and stickers. G) All of the above. (Answer on pg. 456.) —Keith Rosson (1859, 1859records.bandcamp.com)

BLEST MESS: *The Album*: CD

Frontwoman Chris Crash sounds exactly like the singer of the New York Rel-X, but when ten minutes of internet searching did not yield confirmation, I left it at that. Regardless, Blest Mess play, by their own description, old school punk and hardcore, and they've got the chops for it. This is a really solid record, and the sound reminds me of the snotty sensibility of Blanks 77 intertwined with the searing fury of the Distillers. Lyrically, the content relies on traditional punk rock themes of scorn, derision, and alienation, and I'm not sad about that. Good record. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Street Urchin)

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* Full album art is required for a review. Pre-releases go into the trash. Don't treat us like second-rate citizens. We're all volunteers here.

* Are you really sending us a download card or a link to review? Seriously? That's weak. Many of our contributors don't have fancy computers. Nope, we won't review 'em.

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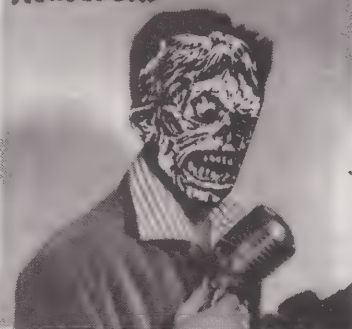
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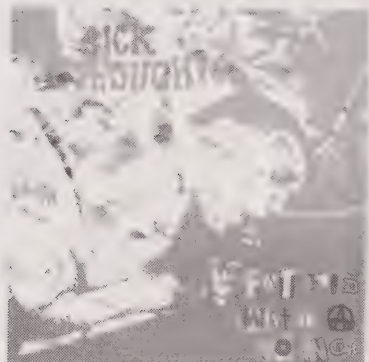


GINO and the GOONS
"Shake It!" lp/tape

THE MONSIEURS



THE MONSIEURS
"Self-Titled" lp/cd



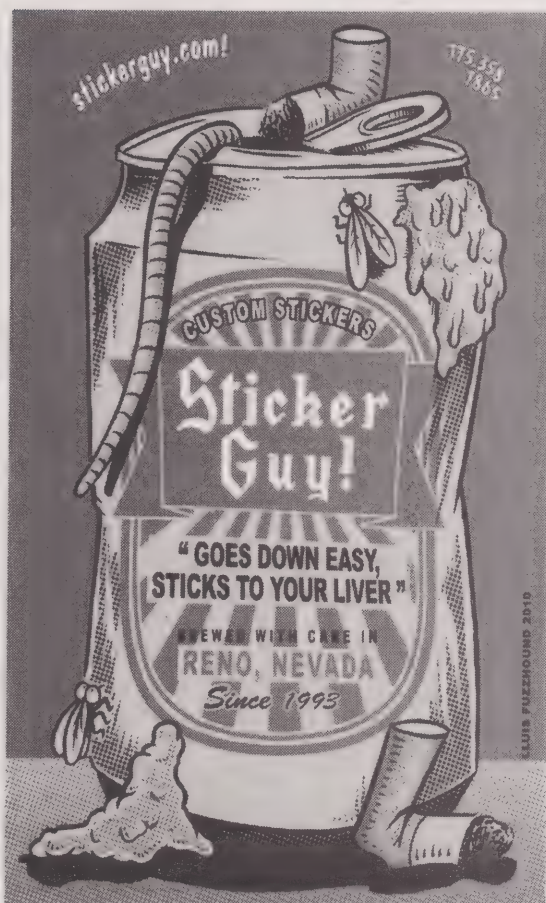
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BORN WRONG: Art District: EP

You can't go wrong with a record that opens up with a fast drum fill and kicks into full-on madness. "Two Faces" is a smasher and basher that gives way to the title track that is actually deserving of the designation: fast as hell and rabid as fuck. Having the bass take over the second half at the end is primo, especially when everyone else piles back in. The vocals are at their best on this one. Then there's the blazing "Catholic Stare"—with its teeth-rattling bass thundering over the rapid-fire percussion—and good move on slowing down slightly on the closer, "Reaching for Nothing." Leaves a lasting impression. —M.Avr (Schizophrenic)

BOXKITE: Demo EP: 7"

I liked Boxkite's 2013 demo featuring four tracks of crisp, melodic hardcore, hence I was quick to order this on its release. However, in the intervening time, the band has all but discarded the tunes in favor of a more forceful approach. A mass of brooding basslines accompany a guitar which adds a hefty crunch into the mix, resulting in an impact not too dissimilar to concrete hitting bone. Gears are shifted up and down throughout and there's a palpable sense of anticipation generated as the slower passages gain momentum before heading into a more frenetic onslaught. Good stuff. —Rich Cocksedge (Tangled Talk, Andrej@tangledtalk.com, tangledtalk.com / Boslevan, boslevanrecords.co.uk)

BOYS ORDER: "Tomorrow Dancing" b/w "Danger! Danger!": 7"

On side A, we learn that if the Epoxies controlled Blondie remotely like robotic surgeons, the first thing they would do is make them learn Japanese, the second thing would be to make them snort helium, and the third thing would be to have them record a demo for Helen Love. On side B, we learn that they'd also make them buy the storm trooper armor from that Mad Capsule Markets video on eBay. You're going to buy this record for the cover anyway, so don't spend a lot of time trying to make sense of this review. **BEST SONG AND SONG TITLE:** "Tomorrow Dancing." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** "Danger! Danger!" exhibits spaces between the words and exclamation points on the cover, but not on the label. —Rev. Nør (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

BROKEDOWNS, THE: Life Is a Breeze: CD/LP

"The Brokedowns go to the Beach." It's not just the palm tree imagery or the lyrical allusions to sand, waves, or tans; this album's got some serious beach punk vibes. Before you start imagining White Wires or Guantanamo Baywatch or what-the-fuck-ever else "beach punk" means to you though, remember that we are still talking about The Brokedowns: the gruffest, heaviest, meanest-sounding band in DIY punk. The record recalls the tropical guitar riffage from the band's 2010 song,

"Apocalypse Seaside Heights," expands on it, and spreads it across an album. But as the most creative band in our scene, they've got plenty of other tricks up their sleeve, so don't think this is some one-note show. There's nothing beachy about the title track and when the guitar riff creeps across the bridge, it's so calculated and evil that I'm pretty sure it could fucking kill people. And the song's refrain—that "life is a breeze—at least it's always for me"—is the kind of sardonic, pissfaced snark that makes my insides smile... Let's just say it's the best album of 2014. Pick it up if you like *Insomniac*, *Witches With Dicks*, or anything catchy and caustic. —Sammy thrashLife (Red Scare)

BURNT ONES / MALLARD, THE:**Split: 7" EP**

The Mallard are no longer, but they offered up this last split before their, well, split. Their side of the single, "Shreds," has an entralling psych garage sound. Greer McGettrick's vocals reverberate with a haunting echo, almost like they bounce back and forth off the strums and melody of the guitar. It's damn good. Flip to the other side, Burnt Ones is really an apt name for their super fuzzed-out, thick-as-smoke tune "Glass Dream R.I.P.s."—dreamy garage, heavy guitar, and sly vocals with plenty of reverb. Another solid single off of Mt. St. Mtn. —Camille Reynolds (Mt. St. Mtn., mtstmnt.com)

CANCERS: Fatten the Leeches: LP

At some point it apparently became cool to mix sludgy dream pop with punk? I'm down with that. So long as there are bands as good as Cancers dishing out their mad science. If I'm remembering my band trees correctly (and, granted, my dendrology hasn't been up to snuff lately) there's a member of Unfun in this band. Not that it really matters, because the musical similarities between these two acts are so minute it's only relevant as a piece of trivia. This record is great though. Like, really, really great. You're all wasting your time as I fruitlessly try to describe this record to you when you should be listening to this record. Those of you who have already heard this album are excused. Grade: A. —Bryan Static (Dead Broke)

CAPITALIST KIDS: At a Loss: LP

Smell is like, what?... sixty percent of taste? *At a Loss* smells great, like a big tub of popcorn. It's on one of the best pop punk labels around and the songs are tight and full of hooks. But the freakin' concession stand kid over-seasoned it with Masked Intruder "oooo's" and "aaahhh's" and the Skiba-styled vocals are that hateful half-popped kernel that makes you think you broke a filling. Lyrics about ecology, gender, and racism wedged between the love songs (and a song starting the LP about not giving a fuck if you don't want politics and pop punk mixed) make for a valiant effort. —Matt Seward (It's Alive / Toxic Pop)

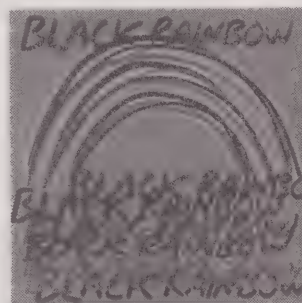
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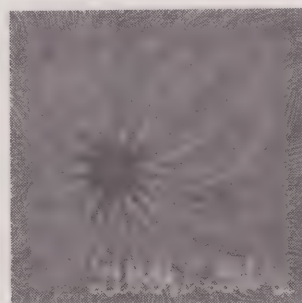
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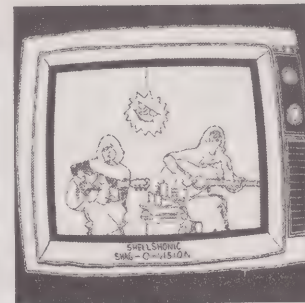
black rainbow lp
black rainbow



Rats Rest 7"
hedonite



lone lilith
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CASTRO: Nocturnally Yours: 7" EP

Slick record cover, first riffs sounded hella rock... uh oh. Wait... what's this?? Amazing female vocals?? Synapses start snapping. Sounds familiar. Head nods, more guitars. This is great, really great. More pulses through the brain. Life But How To Live It? from Norway, that's what the vocals sound like, a real fave from the '80s. The music is pretty slick but works just fine, almost like the first Ten Foot Pole album (that's a compliment, by the way). After a few spins I check my facts and, low and behold, the vocalist is Katja from Life But How To Live It? I can't remember what I had for breakfast but can spot a vocal from twenty years ago. Other members have done time in well-known Norwegian bands like Angor Wat and seem to be even older than me! This is fantastic, driving punk with great songwriting and those vocals? Oy vey. Get. On. It. —Tim Brooks (Boss Tuneage)

CATHOLIC GUILT: Self-titled: LP

A heady mix of "classic" hardcore, arty sensibilities, and a deep, dark undertow from a seriously good Austrian unit. The tempos are kept right around second gear and the song lengths are trim, but they cram a helluva lot of chord structures, droning guitars, and really good ideas in every available space. At times, I'm hearing early Die Kreuzen and TSOL mixed in equal measure, which is no small feat. Really fuggin' impressive this is and an instant fan am I. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dirt Cult)

CAVES: Leaving: CD

It's always good to hear new material from a favorite band and realize that it's even better than previous releases. Caves' *Leaving* is a prime example of this and is evidence of the band's continued evolution. In comparison to 2013's *Betterment*, this record takes on more of a garage punk quality with an all-encompassing warm fuzziness permeating the songs, which brings out the best of both Lou Hannam and Jonathan Minto's vocals. Hannam's guitar sound is the clincher for me, as it has a beautifully deep resonance, perfect for chords and scratchy solos alike—a wonderful aural experience. —Rich Cocksedge (Specialist Subject, specialistsubjectrecords.co.uk)

CHUD: Nice Guy: Cassette

"Nice Guy" is a no-frills '80s punk two-song cassette from this band out of Bloomington, Indiana. The A-side sounds like your pick of any various '80s Midwest hardcore bands, while the flip is less hardcore and more KBD/Bloodstains-influenced. It's snotty and over in a flash, just like it should be. —Mark Twistworthy (Let's Pretend)

CJ RAMONE:**Last Chance to Dance: LP**

On the plus side of non-Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee CJ Ramone's new album, he manages to sound reasonably Ramone-y ((i'm thinkin' *Animal Boy* and maybe the good tracks off of *Halfway to Sanity*, that era)) without sounding like a complete

stylistic slave to his former masters, adds some cool harmonies, delves into the occasional straight-up punked-out Buddy Holly four-chord bopper like you wish the Ramones would have done more often over the last ten or fifteen years of their careers ((("One More Chance"))), and delivers a decent Alice Cooper cover ((("Long Way to Go"))). On the minus side, one'd like to think that, were the Ramones still a going concern, Joey would have found some way to filter some of the blatant bozo fuck-and-chuck aspects out of a song like "Pit Stop" ((then again, Joey was the guy who wrote "Go Home Ann," so what the fuck do I know)), and, if I wanted to listen to music made by right-leaning ex-servicemen who like guns and think Obama is a "disgrace to God and country," i'd go down to the fucking plant and give my co-workers a bunch of guitars. Kind of a wash, all told. **BEST SONG:** "One More Chance." **BEST SONG TITLE:** "Last Chance to Dance." **FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT:** Steve Soto of Agent Orange/Adolescent fame is on guitar, and Tony Cadena sings the Alice Cooper cover. —Rev. Nørð (Fat, fatwreck.com)

CLOSET BURNER: Self-titled: 12" EP

Closet Burner crank out short, sharp blasts of hardcore thrash that are straight to the point, lyrically and musically. Sometimes they slow down just a smidge, displaying a catchy side, like in the very short "Gay Majority" and "The Beast." Musically, they

remind me of Capitalist Casualties, a little bit of Infest and similar bands of that nature. The entire record revolves around gay rights, and it's nice to see/hear them get across the anger and frustration and not go the campy route, unlike some bands I dare not mention. They come out swinging right from the start with "Under the Radar" and keep on going until they end with the Warpath cover of "Abomination" with the apt chorus of "Fuck you, I'm queer." —M.Avrø (Reality Is A Cult)

CLOUD RAT: Moksha: LP

Holy sweet Christ. I'm already embarrassed as I write it, but here goes: *there's grind and then there's Cloud Rat*. Goddamn. I can see why this record has been repressed a bajillion times. Flawless, fierce as nails, punishing, precise, just jaw-droppingly good. This a genre that almost always bores the living shit out of me, but there's something here that's tempering the blast beats and cranium piercing and placing *Moshka* head and shoulders above its peers. I don't know if it's the way the band occasionally lets the instrumentation breathe a bit, or the way the fury is tempered with a few surprising and downright haunting interludes, but everything here—every note and scream and subdued, layered tidbit of background collage, every bit of minutiae—seems entirely intentional and perfectly placed. This is a fucking great record. It just came out of nowhere and laid me to the quick. —Keith Rosson (IFB)



COLA BOYS: Self-titled: 7"

I think I have to wash my record needle after playing this. The music seems to be made out of some kind of black, sticky tar. No matter what speed I play it at, it sounds wrong and infectious. Not infectious in a good way, but in an actual infection sort of way, like this pus-gunk is going to slime its way up the needle and off the record player and come over to me as I sit on my couch. It's going to insert itself into my veins, making me speed up and slow down simultaneously until I just fall apart. This 7" should come with antibiotics. —MP Johnson (Fuck CDs, facebook.com/fckcds)

COLD BLUE MOUNTAIN: Old Blood: LP

With a band name like Cold Blue Mountain and photos of them on horseback on the album insert, sonically, these guys turned out to be way different than I had guessed. There are five tracks on this 12" release and each one is a journey. Start out with beautiful lead guitar work backed by pretty picking on a rhythm guitar, slowly build the drums, add long bass notes that tie in well with the melodies, drop a powerful, breathy growl over top, and you have this five piece from Chico, CA. A good portion of their style is sludgy stoner metal with songs about epic clashes, which I believe to be metaphors about the man, but they could just really be into battles, ala 3 Inches Of Blood. They throw in a few unexpected instruments on *Old Blood* as well. These nuances

blended together so well that I didn't notice them at first, but there's a mix of keyboards, tambourine, cello, and violin. Fans of Nux Vomica and Owen Hart will dig this. —Kayla Greet (Halo Of Flies / coldbluemountain.com)

CONTRASTO / KALASHNIKOV:*Come il Soffitto di una Chiesa***Bombardata: 10" EP**

A formidable pairing of Italian hardcore and punk on one convenient 10" disc: Contrasto's introductory track starts off a bit slow and mellow but shit soon kicks into gear on the following songs, bringing to mind Ebullition-style hardcore and later period Seein' Red. Some moments are chaotic and others catchy—but undeniably hardcore throughout: Contrasto delivers. Kalashnikov is a *Razorcake* HQ favorite that I will be paying closer attention to from now on. Sandwiched in between a poignant "bombs are dropping, cue the laugh track" sound collage and a solemn spoken word piece is Kalashnikov's innovative take on punk and hardcore with revved-up drum charging, full throttle guitar hooks, and fearlessly passionate vocals. Eye-catching artwork envelops this record with lyrics. The music speaks volumes and I'm all ears. —Juan Espinosa (Chaos Rurale / Contrasto, contrastohc.com / Kalashnikov, kalashnikov-collective.blogspot.it)

CRAYON: Brick Factory: LP

Crayon were an early '90s lo-fi twee punk band from Bellingham,

Washington. They thrived on zine culture and shared the stage with Superchunk and the Melvins. HHBTM have lovingly reissued their album, *Brick Factory*, which has been out of print for years. Besides the LP, the download code also includes twenty-one extra songs from compilations and various singles. Upon my first spin, I am immediately struck by the similarities to Sebadoh. (The liner notes point out that Lou Barlow once "cited the album as one of his favorites of the year.") The guitar playing is sparse and minimal, while the vocals are shrill and aggressive, like a disgruntled sixth-grader. Crayon only partially grew on me after repeat listens. Songs like "The Snap-Tight Wars" and "Reason 2600" are delightfully understated and sincere like scrappy Silkworm or Guided By Voices, but the amateurishness and high-pitched vocals verge on aggravating during "Hope in Every Train," "Crown," and "Knee-High Susan." I suspect that if Crayon pushed onward then subsequent records would have featured more mature songwriting. As it is, *Brick Factory* is only for collectors of lo-fi indie punk of the '90s ilk. For everyone else, Crayon may leave you tickled but unsatisfied. —Sean Arenas (HHBTM, hbbtm.com)

CRAZY & THE BRAINS: Good Lord: LP

Who the hell uses a xylophone as an instrument in their main lineup? Crazy & The Brains, that's who. They actually make it work by using the instrument as a "flavor sound" over super catchy

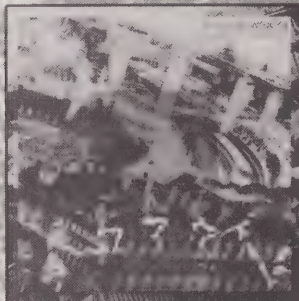
pop punk, somewhere between the Queers and Mean Jeans. It's party music, something to play that people couldn't possibly get mad at. Or, if they do, you know that they're probably not friendship material. I'm serious. Cut out all of the people in your life who don't like this record because they don't like fun. Once you do that, you'll be comforted by the loving embrace of Crazy & The Brains. Grade: A- —Bryan Static (Baldy Longhair)

CROSS: "Pyre" b/w "Repetition": 7"

I was trying to think of ways to not compare this to Masshysteri. Then I realized that it actually was the singer from Masshysteri. I loved that band and was completely unaware any members were already onto other projects. This single takes a departure from the seamless post-punk that I fell in love with when I first heard Masshysteri. There is a psychedelic element to these songs. Cross is a two-piece band exploring the more experimental side of post-punk and art punk without being obnoxious. It's a great direction for these guys. Buy this record. —Ryan Nichols (Deranged)

DARKSIDE NYC: Optimism Is Self-Deception: Vols. 1&2: CD

The incredibly long-awaited return of this truly terrifying and vile NYHC institution, *Optimism Is Self-Deception* is the first full-length offering from Darkside NYC since 1989's *Ambitions Make Way for Dread*, and time has certainly not mellowed this maniacal



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force even slightly. With a pedigree that includes membership in Sheer Terror, Merauder, All Out War, and more genuinely frightening, classic hardcore acts, Darkside NYC builds upon its roots in New York's urban soundscape with nods to first wave black metal, d-beat crust, and even incorporates elements of dark industrial noise. The outcome is a brutally heavy, vicious record with one foot in familiar territory and the other in a bleak, metallic world all its own. Incredible. —Dave Williams (Satan Wears Suspenders, satanwearsuspenders.com)

DEAD DOG: *Precious Child*: LP

Dead Dog from Athens, Georgia do power pop and power trio just right. The crashing drums, fuzzed-out guitar notes, rumbling bass, and scratchy sing-song vocals each have room to breathe, but come together as a loud and jubilant whole. The songs celebrate underdog life and present as punk, but move along with an undercurrent of the sweetest '90s alterna-pop. The eight-song album (ask Nørb if this counts as an LP) comes together with such sureness that the Ramones cover at the end could pass for an original. —Chris Terry (Dead Broke)

DEAD ON TV: *Creeper*: CDEP

Their follow up to *Fuck You, I'm Famous* sees 'em stomping on similar terra, namely pristinely recorded (courtesy of the Blasting Room) "electro-punk." An aggro-infused, yet fairly faithful of Tears For Fears' "Pale

Shelter" should tell you all you need to know. This ain't my bag at all, but I can totally see the under-twenty set grooving on their next Warped Tour set. —Jimmy Alvarado (Dead On TV, deadontv.org)

DEATH: *Leprosy*: 2 x CD

This sounds tame in comparison to what came a short time later in death metal. However, that's not to discount the importance and impact this album had at the time of its release in 1988. It just shows how fast the death metal genre progressed and has continued to do so to this very day. Not sure if these guys were the first death metal band, but I do know that, from my perspective, they reached a bigger underground audience. At the time I was deeply entrenched in hardcore punk, and anything remotely metal was considered "the enemy" (despite the fact that I loved bands like Iron Maiden, Venom, Nuclear Assault, Metallica, Anthrax, Slayer, and Exodus). But if you were part of the underground music scene at the time, you had to at least be aware of who Death were. I had a couple friends who were starting to gravitate towards metal at the time, so Death was something played in the car on our weekend skate excursions about town. Speed metal was one thing, but hearing Death, things started to get a little darker and heavier. No songs about Mutant Ninja Turtles, or Satan; instead it was death and despair—something that really alarmed the hell out of parents and other watchdogs of

"good taste." The guitar sound on here is great: crushing riffs, filthy distortion that buzzes and rings in your ears long after the song ended, and the drums are like a mad chopping machine, held together by the evil low end rumble of the bass. This has all the traits of classic death metal. From the screaming guitar slows and embellishments, rapid-fire drumming, growling vocals, and headbanging riffs that you would have to be comatose to not react in kind to. Relapse has done a pretty nice job with this reissue. Not only do you get the full original LP, there is also a recording of rehearsal nearly a year before the album came out. Then there are the liner notes, a sketch of the cover art, photos, and lyrics. Remember, "Relief does not exist / When you are born to die." —M.Avg (Relapse)

DIALS: *School Girl*: 7"

I found myself surprised by how much I like Dials. Despite sleazy lines in their song "School Girls," stating they want to "ride a high school girl to horny town," Dials' brand of punchy, Japanese garage punk had me singing along after the first listen. Side B's "Nervous" had me hip shaking and clapping away. My only gripe for this two-song 7" is I wish it were longer. —Ashley Ravelo (Secret Mission / Mangrove)

DINERS: *Always Room*: LP

I don't know how they do it in Arizona, but that desert is home to a circle of hard-touring multi-instrumentalists that rivals any scene I've ever encountered.

Diners is near the center of the web, meaning that the band overlaps in membership with the likes of Dogbreth, Blanche Beach, Amadou's Crew, and a host of other Phoenix-area artists, to their immense benefit. I've seen Diners play at least half a dozen times in the last couple years, and the day that guitar harmony in "Good Zone" doesn't make me go, "Oh shit!" is the day I give up on DIY shows. Much like, oh, the rest of their entire catalogue to date, *Always Room* is unbelievably tight and impossibly smooth—but not at the expense of depth. Sweet as it is, to sum this up as simple saccharine pop would be a disservice to what this band is capable of: shimmering harmonies, complex songwriting, unexpected progressions. Diners play something that's accessible to literally anybody, but I mean that in a sense far from "bland and inoffensive." It feels more like a warm welcome from a new friend. Now that I think of it, that's a pretty decent description of *Always Room* as a whole. —Indiana Laub (Phat'n'Phunky, bob@phatnphunky.com / Diet Pop, dietspoprecords@gmail.com)

DISCONNECTS, THE: *Wake up Dead*: LP

Like Johnny Thunders and Lou Reed, the Disconnects seem to possess the natural ability to turn on a dime, making room for ballsy, bluesy, punk rock'n'roll as well as teenage, lonely hearts ballads. This is not to say that *Wake up Dead* is some sentimental,



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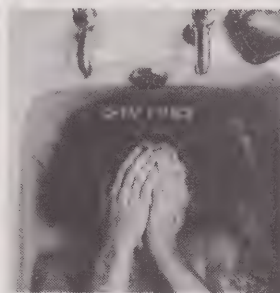
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copycat walk down memory lane. It sounds new and old at the same time. It has style and attitude without punk kitsch. Turn this mother fucker up, loud! —John Mule (Baldy Longhair, baldylonghair.com)

DRUNK DRIVERS:

It's Always Weekend: CD

The black, white, and red spray can and stencil style artwork of Drunk Driver's grammatically questionable *It's Always Weekend* did not prepare me for the Midwestern quartet's sonic approach. Far from snarky, rebellious youths, these twenty-year veterans may indulge in puerile "fuck you, dad" aesthetics, but deliver something more akin to '90s radio alt rock than '90s streetpunk. The drawl-then-growl vocals, mid-range tempos, and guitar tones occasionally feel dated, but the musicianship and songwriting are solid, and it's evident that everyone is having fun. Pleasant surprises sporadically disrupt the vibe, with catchy moog creeping into "A M Gold" and "Girls Gone Wild," the former offering a rousing round of "woo-oo-oo"s, and the latter featuring one excellent Diamond Dave ad lib. —Kelley O'Death (Crustacean)

DUNCAN REID AND THE BIG HEADS:

The Difficult Second Album: LP

I hadn't heard Duncan "Kid" Reid's old band The Boys until I bought their second album at age fourteen, so I guess it only makes sense that I start my Duncan Reid And The Big Heads exposure with the second album as

well. And, whilst this record will hardly stoke the teenage froth of *The Boys* or *Alternative Chartbusters*—the OOMPH factor here is somewhere between the third/fourth Boys album and *Blaze* by Herman's Hermits—I gotta say, I fricking LOVE Duncan Reid and this record. The guy just seems so dang cheerful, ya know? Whatever he sings about—having kids, getting old, getting drunk—he does it with such a easy wit and charm that I am quite unable to muster any symptoms of being grouchy or ill at ease, and quite unable to say that I wished it sounded more like The Boys, or less like The Boys, or anything of the sort. Like the smallest bowl of the three bears' porridge, it sounds just right. The band is two girls and two guys, and they're all good-looking, all dressed cool, all having fun—the cover art is cool, the photos are cool, the songs are cool—as far as I'm concerned, Duncan Reid is officially The Guy Who Made Being In Your Fifties Cool. Don't laugh, asshole, that'll come in handy some day. BEST SONG: "One Night in Rio" BEST SONG TITLE: "End of the World" because it solidifies the Peter Noone claim. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The lyric sheet is a big hunk of paper, approximately 16"x12", folded in thirds, and I've never encountered a lyric sheet of that shape before. —Rev. Nørb (Wanda)

DWARVES, THE: *Gentleman Blag: 7"*

I have an uneasy relationship with The Dwarves. The band's overt sexism is something that doesn't sit well, tongue

in cheek or otherwise, causing me to cringe when seeing the covers of releases, song titles, and/or lyrics. It's a damn shame, really, because this is a band that knows the art of writing hugely catchy tunes which, unencumbered by dodgy lyrics, I would listen to a whole lot more. For the record, the four tracks on this single all sound pretty good, especially "Kings of the World," which is one of the songs I can listen to without wincing. —Rich Cocksedge (Fat Wreck)

ELDERGAAD: *Day Zero: CD*

I don't care about trends, and I'm glad that bands like Eldergaad don't either. Right now, metal is all about doom. If you're into gloomy, stonery, Sabbath stuff, the metal section is full of it. I'm not super into that. A few years ago though, there was a big thrash resurgence. I was way into that. Of course, I was way into thrash when I was twelve. I was into thrash during the thrash resurgence, and now that it has died out and been replaced with a new fad, I'm still into thrash! Eldergaad is too. There will be no slow headbanging while listening to this disc. This shit moves fast, despite the epic length of some of the songs. It's very old school, with a lot of riffing, a lot of wild solos, and a lot of fun. —MP Johnson (Zero Budget, eldergaad.bandcamp.com)

EXPERIMENTAL TROPIC BLUES BAND: *The Belgians: LP*

Lo-fi garage punk that starts off sounding like a raucous rock'n'roll

band played through an A Frames/S.S. Records filter, but by the end of the record sounds completely different. The song "Belgian States of Frustration" sounds like a lost B-side from the latest Spray Paint LP—angular and disjointed. Other more straightforward parts of this record are fucked-up, bluesy garage punk in an Oblivians kind of way. There's a complete curveball thrown in every once in a while—the song "She Could Be My Daughter" sounds like an old traditional drinking song—while "Belgians Don't Cry" comes off sounding like an European electro-punk dance track. Overall, it is really good stuff. When they stick to the trashy rock'n'roll, I'm convinced that this is the best record I've heard in months. —Mark Twistworthy (Jaune Orange, jauneorange.be)

EXTRA FEELER:

Queen for a Day: Demo 2013: Cassette
Eight tracks of melodic, DIY pop punk from some people who used to live on one coast of the country, then lived on the other coast, and then moved on the other side again. Extra Feeler includes Erick Lyle and Gaybob, whom you may remember from outfits such as Black Rainbow, Miami, Crybaby Macarthur, Blonde Ambition, and a couple bands with "dirty" in their names. If you enjoy any of their previous bands, from either coast, it would do ya well to check out this one, as it stays on track with their prior worthwhile efforts. —Vincent (Dead Broke)

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FU MARYLOU: Mi Bouncy: CD

I don't know who MaryLou is, but, damn, she pissed somebody off. This is angry, brash, and crude punk rawk in the dirty-glitter Los Angeles tradition. This is the kind of band you could take home to mother if your mother was Exene Cervenka in the early '00s. —Lisa Weiss (Breaking Balls, fumarylou.la)

FALL FROM GRACE, THE: The Colours of Change: CD

Not to be confused with the Seattle band Fall From Grace, this three piece from Copenhagen, Denmark has one guy singing and another guy screaming. (Or maybe it's the same guy? The CD doesn't list who does what.) When the screaming guy screams, it sounds like Tim from Rise Against and when he sings it can be reminiscent of Jonah from Far. I'm old enough to remember there being a lot of this singing/screaming melodic hardcore/punk stuff going on in the early to mid 2000s. *The Colours of Change* has song titles like, "If Only These Walls Would Sleep," "Funeral for an Enemy," and "Retribution Revolution," which, while unique, are also the type of song titles that seem to accompany this kind of music. These types of bands want to be slightly poetic with their titles to go along with their oh-so-emotional sound; they never are direct with their song titles, and rarely do they ever use just one word. The exception for this on *The Colours of Change* is that the album is bookended with the songs "Introvert" and "Extrovert." Just like

the rest of this album, it's incredibly clever and creative. Uh, not really. —Kurt Morris (Schizophrenic)

FERAL TRASH: Trashfiction: LP

Take that Vicious/Masshysteri stealthy, too cool sleekness and mix it with The Creeps' creepiness. Having vocals from all three members gives these songs some serious depth. This is music to listen to at the bottom of a well. I slept on Fear Of Lipstick (one of those guys is in this band) 'cause of the name, but I will not make the same mistake with Feral Trash. If you're a fan of dark, melodic punk from Umeå and/or Ottawa, check out this record. —Daryl (Mammoth Cave / Dirt Cult)

FINNEGAN'S HELL:**Drunk, Sick and Blue: CD**

This is pretty legit-sounding Irish/Celtic punk from Sweden, which seems like an odd mix to me. The band is made up of a bunch of a group of Swedish punk and hard rock musicians that discovered Irish folk music. They all have the musical chops. These songs are all done very authentically with a punk twist, including some traditional Irish folk songs. If you're a fan of Flogging Molly and The Pogues and think they would sound great together, then you'll likely be into this too. —Mark Twistworthy (Heptown, records@heptown.com)

FRAU: Punk Is My Boyfriend: 7"

Shrieking, angular discordance with enough riot grrrl sass that someone

with a more eclectic record collection than mine might call it danceable—in a ghoulish art student party sort of way. Two out of three songs don't break the one-minute mark, and the third wavers on the brink of collapse the whole way there. Crass never really meant much to me (so sue me), but weird punks looking for a chaotic modern offshoot of *Penis Envy* will probably get a kick out of this. —Indiana Laub (Static Shock)

FROZEN TEENS: Self-titled: 7" single

Two contrasting songs. "Oakland" is a loud and kind of thrashy rocking number that moves quick and forceful with a dirty guitar sound and somewhat belligerent vocals. The main riff hammers and the change-ups bash through. Though it's "Footsteps" that I keep going back to. The guitar at the beginning brings to mind Pinback. Clean, dark, and just right. The songs bounce back and forth from quiet and introspective to loud and frustrated. The way they switch, and all the bits and pieces that come in during the changes to propel the song forward, are perfect. The way they tie it all up at the end is pret'near godhead. So nice! —M.Avrq (Starcleaner, starcleaner.com)

GIVE: Electric Flower Circus: LP

The full-length debut from one of the most charismatic and interesting new hardcore bands in recent memory, *Electric Flower Circus* expands upon Give's earlier output (a slew of singles and EPs, most of which were collected on 2013's *Singles Going Confetti*)

of "Revolution Summer"-influenced hardcore that hearkens that era's penchant for emotional, dramatic punk rock while incorporating elements from hardcore's more adventurous trailblazers (think Into Another, American Standard, Supertouch, Burn) and heavier, funk-tinged-metal ala *The End of Silence*-period Rollins Band. Give's unique, rather accessible approach coupled with its somewhat cultish, flowery shtick has made the band a hot little ticket for some time now and this killer LP will only serve to broaden the "flowerhead" fanbase. Great stuff. —Dave Williams (Moonflower, moonflowerrecords.bigcartel.com)

GUN CLUB: Fire of Love: LP

The one that started it all. Gun Club's 1981 debut LP *Fire of Love* is back courtesy of Porterhouse Records, remastered for maximum of immortality. With both Tito Larriva (Plugz) and Chris D. (Flesh Eaters) helming the production, *Fire of Love* is a sauntering, cyclonic escapade of twanged-out perfection. Anyone familiar with this band knows how essential this record is. But to the uninitiated, if you like X and The Cramps and wanna dig a little deeper into seedy L.A. punk rock history: check out this band, and start with this record. Undeniable classic. —Daryl (Porterhouse, porterhouserecords.com)

HARD ACTION: Dead Dogs: 7"

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is a Scandinavian rock band, which I got from the record cover alone before I heard the tunes. Thank god bands like this still exist. Seriously. I grew up in the nineties, for fuck sakes. The Hellacopters *Payin' the Dues* changed my world. It's a shame this genre has largely fizzled out. Well, apparently not, considering this ripping single on Svart Records. Two blasters along the lines of The Peepshows meets Zeke. Oh, and in typical Euro fashion, impeccable packaging on this single: pocket sleeve with shrink wrap and all. A perfect product for a debut release. —Steve Adamyk (Svart)

HARES, THE: *Smoking in Bed*: CD

Picked this up outta the piles after seein' a tune titled "Alvarado Sun." Yep, never let it be said I'm not easily swayed. Was a little wary when I noticed the horn section—such things too often scream "bad ska"—so I was a bit surprised by what came out of the speakers. What yer getting here is a wild mix of punk, rock'n'roll and deep south jump blues. Think Top Jimmy And The Rhythm Pigs on a five-day meth bender burning a New Orleans juke joint to the ground and you're on the right track. Shit's tight, fun, appropriately over the top, and I'm certain their live sets are off the chain. —Jimmy Alvarado (Saustex)

HARLAN T BOBO: *Too Much Love*: CD

Harlan T. Bobo mixes the vocal inflections of Andrew Bird and the tone of Tom Waits. *Too Much Love*

opens strong with "Only Love," which is just the right amount of melancholy. Reminiscent of "Back in the Crowd," the song sounds as if Tom Waits were singing me a bedtime lullaby. After the first two songs I was excited, expecting a texturally rich and unique experience. Instead, I was met with a mishmash of genres and loose ends. Harlan never pushes his singing into realms that are exciting or interesting. Rather, he relies on the same vocal inflections that are too well within his comfort zone. Also, he overuses spoken word portions, which emphasizes a lack of lyrical prowess and ranges from dull to creepy—I would not recommend listening to "Stop" alone in the dark. With the exception of few standout songs that leave me with hope for a stronger LP the next time around, *Too Much Love* left me feeling meh. —Ashley Ravelo (Goner, goner-records.com, gonerrecords@gmail.com)

HASSLER: *Fed Worked and Watered*: LP

Guttural, John Brannon-esque vocals backed by fist-pumping hardcore punk in the vein of Out Cold. It's thick as steak, and just as juicy. Frustration and anger are pretty common themes for punk songs, but I particularly appreciate their track "Snowbound" which is a blunt attack on people who complain about Toronto's weather, "Shut it up / Suck it up / If you don't like it / Move." If you need something to warm you up, Hassler is white hot. Features members of Brutal Knights and Reprobates. —Daryl (Deranged)

HELLBASTARD: *Sons of Bitches*: 12" EP

I'm sorry, Hellbastard, but this is bullshit. I could maybe look past the fact that you used twelve inches of vinyl for four songs, but you listed six on the sleeve. Sorry, "Wolfson" is just the sound of wolves howling. That doesn't count as a song. Neither does the throwaway reggae track, "Throw the Petrol Bomb." To make matters worse, I've heard the four songs before. Three of them are on the split with Dresden. One is a rerecording of an old track. Don't get me wrong, these songs are killer, and I said as much in my review of the Dresden split (seriously dudes, those guitar solos!). But why did you release them again, making it look like there's twice as much stuff when there really isn't? I think your fans should just buy the Dresden split. More metal for their dollars. —MP Johnson (Patac)

HOBO BASTARD: *Strange Wang*: LP

Who are these guys? Are they someone's favorite band somewhere? Is this cover supposed to be a tribute to the bad Photoshopped graphic design of twenty or twenty-five years ago, or is it on the level? Do they think they sound like the Ergs? Does the singer not know he keeps missing notes regularly, or is that his thing? Wouldn't a good working definition of "good production" on a punk album be "it sounds good but it doesn't sound like anyone spent a lot of time or money trying to make it sound good?" Where do these songs end and begin? Wouldn't a lyric sheet have been a good idea? What happened to

choruses? Are any of these song titles even in the song lyrics? Why do people write songs in time signatures where the top number is a multiple of three and the bottom number is a power of two? How many tempo changes can a record have before it stops holding any hope of a claim to being rock'n'roll? Oh! I kind of like this line in "Four Chords of Fucking Shit" that goes "I hope when my song is gone no one remembers." Challenge accepted! BEST SONG: "Four Chords of Fucking Shit" BEST SONG TITLE: "Stoner Jam in Boner Land" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The message "I am the walrus, coo coo cachoo" (sic) is etched into the run-off grooves of both sides. —Rev. Nørb (Boomchock!)

HURULA: *Vi Är Människorna Våra Föräldrar Varnade Oss För*: LP

From the ruins of Masshysteri remains Robert Hurula, singer and guitarist for the lauded Swedish punk outfit. Masshysteri waded in the pop waters, while Hurula dives headfirst into the deep end of upbeat, keyboard-driven pop rock. Like label-mates Fucked Up, genres are conflated and the production is crisp. I'm also reminded of fellow Swedes Vänna Inget, whose latest record, *Ingen Botten*, is a similarly brooding tapestry of no wave hits. Hurula's guitars swish and swoop like wayward specters, while the sparse rhythms on the hi-hat and snare conjure The Cure. His croon is transported right out of the '80s, however. The untranslated lyrics make for some

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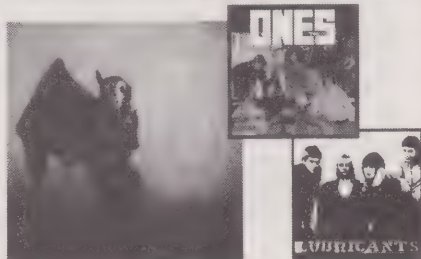
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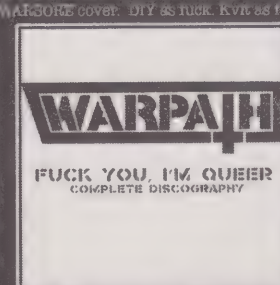
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garbled singalongs during the morning commute, although contagious choruses transcend all languages. The pulsing keys of "Sluta deppa mig" are hypnotic, while "Sveriges ungdom" instigates some boogieing by doubling the pace and ramping up the post-punk grandiosity. Closer "Det är ok om du glömmar mig" hardwires into my limbic system with scientific precision, leaving my brain fizzing from the emotional surge as the guitars shriek until the final crash. Hurula's first LP is a rare pop rock classic with all of the vulnerability, passion, and urgency of a fierce punk band. Highly recommended. —Sean Arenas (Deranged, derangedrecords.com)

INSTITUT: "Giddy Boys" & "Success" b/w "Fate in a Pleasant Mood":7"

The record's insert includes a pic of Gustave Courbet's "A Burial at Ornans." "Burial" is a huge (approx. 10' x 22') painting of a provincial French funeral in the mid-nineteenth century. Centered in the painting's foreground is the burial plot, which suggests to its observers that the plot is theirs, given the plot's size and placement. It is one of many moments of genius in Courbet's impressive oeuvre; here, however, it is shrunk down, leaving only a glimpse of its brilliance. The painting is fitting with Institut's attitude, as it is an unflattering and unforgiving representation, which has obvious preoccupation with the certainty of one's own death. But like the insert, Institut is serviceable, and

the band doesn't really do anything but pay homage to its forbearers' (see, e.g., Wire and The Fall) moments of genius in a shrunken down manner. The two songs that fill out the front are fast, bouncy post-punk with a doomed-to-live mindset. The backside takes a little risk, hinting at an ability and desire to experiment, with the background chanting and a death rock dirge, but Institut plays it pretty straight for post-punk, while retaining the existential crisis touched upon on the front. —Vincent (Katorga Works, katorgaworks.bigcartel.com)

JASON BANCROFT AND THE WEALTHY BEGGARS: *This Machine*: CD

The acoustic punk rock retirement plan seems a comfortable fit for Houston pickers Jason Bancroft And The Wealthy Beggars. Compared readily to Woody Guthrie and Billy Bragg, Bancroft's vocals will remind most punks more of post-Rumbleseat, pre-Springsteen Chuck Ragan. The subject matter on their debut *This Machine* fulfills every quota for this kind of record, celebrating blue-collar pride and introspective storytelling, but the band's influences and themes often seem too on the nose, especially on "Move On Woody, Move On" and their gruff cover of "I'll Fly Away." The Wealthy Beggars are undeniably talented, and the purity of their mission will endear them to many, but those reeling from genre oversaturation may be left

wondering what sets them apart from the pack. —Kelley O'Death (Vinal Edge, retail@vinaledge.com, vinaledge.com / Cactus Music, cactusmusicct.com)

JETTY BOYS: *Singles Collection*: LP

Singles collections can be tricky things. Side 1 can be all A sides and the reverse all Bs. Or they can be A/B chronology... either way, the potential of fifty percent let-down continuously hovers. Jetty Boys and Urban Pirate smartly stack this collection LP with their sides of six split releases, harvesting the sound of a band consistently trying to outdo their compatriots' side (plus three unreleased tracks). Cobbled together in this fashion, Jetty Boys have released an incredibly strong and impressively cohesive full length. *Singles Going Steady* for nuevo pop punk fiends. Check those "12 Steps" and "Not Even Close" leads for Buzzcocks reference. —Matt Seward (Urban Pirate, urbanpiraterecords.storenvy.com)

JODY SEABODY AND THE WHIRLS:

Some Witch: 7"

From my original hometown of Houston, the A-side of this single combines choppy indie rock with a modern Warped Tour-esque screamo dual vocal approach. You likely know the type—in this case, softly sung vocals about angels and shit with angry, shouty vocals layered over the top. Flip it over and you have a call and response style punk anthem about why Tuesday is the worst day of the week, complete

with a singalong chorus that made me think of "If the Kids Are United." Then, out of nowhere, this song takes a left turn into a weird, dreamy, psychedelic outro chant about everybody wanting to talk about Tuesdays. Overall, this is pretty much all over the place and hard to put a finger on despite some decent moments here and there. —Mark Twistworthy (Artificial Head, artinstitute.bandcamp.com)

JOE JACK TALCUM:

***Home Recording's 1993-99*: LP**

I confess: I am not, nor have ever been, a Dead Milkmen fan. I mention this because Joe Jack Talcum is the guitarist and a vocalist in the revered satirist punk outfit from Philadelphia. Being unfamiliar with the Milkmen's albums has allowed me to be objective when listening to this collection. Ultimately, I was pleasantly surprised. The songs are lo-fi, which accents Talcum's breathy voice; imagine shutting your eyes while behind the wheel of your car, the windows cracked open so that a hiss of air blows pass your ears. Daniel Johnston and Kimya Dawson are obvious comparisons; however, Talcum's songs are less disjointed and agonized, rather more assured and sardonic. Talcum practically hums over foreboding organ notes on one of the LP's most haunting moments, "Go." The songs meander into each other like a daydream until the instrumental, "Sweet and Sour," and "Be My Property" interrupt the slow tempos with electric guitar and hard-hitting



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drums. B Side opener and highlight "Another Time" is a contemplative folk song in the vein of Elliott Smith and the musicians of label K Records, while "Forever Expanding Dream" is as meditative as the title suggests. *Home Recording's* is bedtime listening that will infiltrate your dreams with its understated melodies and blanket you with its warmth. —Sean Arenas (HHBTM, hbbtm.com)

JOHN SCHOOLEY AND WALTER DANIELS: *Dead Mall Blues*: LP

I always let the artwork on the covers of albums allow me to assume what I think the music will sound like. The eighties look of this record lead me astray in a good way. *Dead Mall Blues* is all harmonica, banjo, and acoustic guitars. If you're looking for some background music for your bottle of whiskey or your campfire, this is it. I can't help but think how well these songs would compliment a show like *Breaking Bad*, *Sons of Anarchy*, or something with a southern back drop. If you're a fan of classic country, old blues, and Americana music, these boys satisfy your appetite. They cover songs like, "We Got to Meet Death One Day" by Blind Willie McTell and "Cluck Old Hen." —Ryan Nichols (12XU, info@12XU.net)

K., THE: *My Flesh Reveals Millions of Souls*: CD

Noisy, wiry, and ready to split up into a million pieces. Looping bass lines, manic drums fills and vocals that go

from a whisper to a howl at the drop of a hat. Guitars that could cause puncture wounds. "Dawn Riser" and "Maneater" are my favorites on this record. It's heavy, sure, but there are dynamics here too. This trio from Brussels channels McLusky, Big Black, and Drive Like Jehu into a potent cocktail. Take a swig. —Sean Koepenick (Juane Orange, mgmt@thek.be)

KUNG FU CRIMEWAVE: *Guerillas in the Midst*: Cassette

Brooklyn's Kung Fu Crimewave seems to not want to follow any trends. Abnormal, strange, ethereal pop songs are nothing new, but there's an interesting vibe to these tracks, with severe anger bubbling right under the surface. There are a lot of extra instruments here, including keyboards and horns, plus the female backing vocals are mixed high. Also, the cassette is on the pro end of tapes, came shrink-wrapped, and includes a download card. There are probably eight big fans of Kung Fu Crimewave, but I'd like to shake their presumably existent hands. —Art Ettinger (Baldy Longhair)

LEFTY LUCY: *Phantom Breaker 1993-1996*: LP

This picture disc apparently collects two EPs, a cassette compilation track, and a previously unreleased full-length. That's twenty-one songs, y'all. I was leery to put this on—discography releases of bands I'm not already fanatical about can be draining—but this one pulls off something pretty

cool. *Phantom Breaker* started out as the kind of music I care the least about (under-produced garage rock with drawling, repetitive vocals) but quickly started morphing into something a good deal more interesting... a few different things, actually. "Nostalgia for the Mud," three tracks deep, is heavy, melodic, and arrestingly off-kilter. There are plenty of other winners to follow, including the ominous "False Sabretooth," and "Angel's Dread," a split-personality jam that oscillates between sing-song alt-pop and raging hardcore. Inevitably, a synth starts making appearances as we draw closer to 1996. Lefty Lucy made the rounds in their time, sharing stages with Bikini Kill and Dead Milkmen, each of whom is a decent point of comparison at some point in the span of this discography. Every other song reminds me of a different band from that terrain between punk and grungy alt-rock: Squirrel Bait, Gauge, later Hüsker Dü, plus some incidental horns and a "Kids in America" cover for good measure. Worth a spin, even for a first-time listener. —Indiana Laub (Mpls Ltd, djcfritz@hotmail.com, mplsLtd.com)

LETHAL OVERDOSE: *Unfinished Business*: LP


First-ever album release for this obscure Australian hardcore/crossover act. Recorded in 1988 and apparently sold on cassette at the band's shows around that time period, that cassette is unfortunately the only existing source, and we all know how well

cassettes hold up over time. However, a quality transfer and remastering job results in a remarkably decent sound. Very reminiscent of a crossover but pre-metal D.R.I. Fast and tight, anti-religion, anti-government, anti-war and anti-melody! Great riffs, intelligent lyrics, the occasional thrash guitar lead, and just enough variety to keep things interesting in this very confining style. My only complaint is that there's nothing in the liner notes in the way of band history, and an internet search yielded very little, other than the fact that three of these songs were actually released in 1989 on a four-band Aussie comp called *Thankyou Charles*. Nonetheless, an excellent find and worth picking up. —Chad Williams (Collision Course, collisioncourserecords.com)

LETHAL OVERDOSE: *Unfinished Business*: LP

Hard not to get behind this story. Dude from Collision Course Records comes upon a Lethal Overdose cassette some twenty-five years ago, loves it for easy reasons, and rather than let it disintegrate after a dozen moves or have it fall into the hands of some careless sibling who he's maybe already losing to the radio, the guy re-releases these seventeen songs on vinyl. *Unfinished Business* is it, an unrelenting collection of Australian thrash hardcore that hews more to melodic coherence over growling brutality. The rhythm and vocal pacing makes me think early Dischord or SST, as the opening track

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"Against the Grain" has the manifesto feel and pacing of an Australian take on the anthemic "Minor Threat," but Lethal Overdose is wholly bizarre in its own way. "Don't Vote for Judges" shifts from song into some sort of geometric noise machine where singers Dicko and Dave trade shouts of "no judges" until the lyrics give up and become sounds, and seconds later—zoom—more whirring hardcore goodness of "City Limits." The easy first place for this season's record time capsule contest—no itchiness, bumps, or lumps and it comes in milky-yellow vinyl with red and black splashes, a speckled beauty. —Jim Joyce (Collision Course, collisioncourserecords.com)

LIFE IS BONKERS: *Greatest Hits*: CD

As a kid, I was in love with shitty movies with punk aspirations—think Penelope Spheeris' *Dudes* or *Glory Daze* starring Ben Affleck's goatee—and the main selling point was their frenetic soundtracks featuring a smattering of bands you'd heard of and some you'd never hear from again. Sacramento's two-man band Life Is Bonkers would have fallen into the latter category, but their Jello-Biafra-and-Adam-Goren-force-feeding-synth-to-Dave-Quackenbush styling would have felt right at home squealing non-diegetically while Henry Rollins pursued Charlie Sheen at top speeds. Their *Greatest Hits* is a cacophony of dance-y keyboard, irreverent lyrics, and fuzzy guitar that both caught me off guard and entranced me immediately.

So weird and so wonderful. —Kelley O'Death (Hydrozoan, sacjimbo@yahoo.com, jamesnicholasmohr.com)

LIFE LIKE: *Savages EP*: 7"

Life Like, from St. Louis, Missouri, play vomit-inducing blown-out hardcore. The singer grunts and howls like an exhumed Darby Crash, which isn't particularly groundbreaking. But the guitar tone is what saves this otherwise average 7". The guitars blanket the pulsing drums in fuzz, almost like Cult Ritual. Yet, Life Like sounds like they cherry-picked the qualities of better bands, but forgot to sprinkle in something new, something original. With lyrics like "I'm a walking disease" and "I'm an animal" and "I'm caught in a system," Life Like compels me to say, "I'm not impressed." —Sean Arenas (Deranged)

LIQUID DIAMONDS: *Aw Maw*: 7"

And the hits from Hozac just keep coming. This time you get heavy protopunk circa 1973 from a band featuring Sonny Vincent before he went on to the Testors, who also did a version of the title track. Swagger and stomp are in abundance on the two tunes here, which are apparently the only known recordings of the band. —Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

LISTEN LADY: *Self titled*: 7"

This band harkens me back to every reason I got into local music in the first place. Part of that is because they wear their influences on their sleeves, part

because they're not afraid to try things differently than those influences, and absolutely because they're completely aware of where they're going. Listen Lady is a female-fronted four piece from Seattle that makes me want to make daisy chains in the park on the sunniest day of the year and then ride bikes while talking about love with close friends. Saccharine pop sensibilities bleed through like a broken heart and cymbals shatter the pieces and crash them about the room, while the bass and drums pump new life into melancholia. "Little Mouse" opens up with a riff that reminds me of the theme song to *Kids in the Hall*. Lyrically, it's about feeling small and insignificant around someone you care about while they're as large as a lion. My favorite lines from it are: "If my heart had a food chain you would be on top / And if I had my way I'd never be safe from you / But hiding in these walls is all I ever seem to do." Guitarist L supplies backup vocals on that track with Siobhan, and the melodic tones they create are like candy. Not every track is pleasant though. "Hey Listen" is a fed up, angst-filled jam about getting creeped on by unrelenting dudes with shitty intentions. It ends with the lyrics, "Why do you think you can talk to me like that?" on repeat. If you're into Lemuria, Braid, and The Pixies, make some room for this band in your collection. —Kayla Greet (Cat Dead Details Later, catdeadrecs.com / Off The Books, offthebooksrecords.bandcamp.com)

LOBSTER KILLED ME: *Ghost*: LP

I reviewed a single by these Frenchies for another rag a few years back and was immediately taken aback by how terrible their name is. I understand language barriers and shit, but using the book/cover strategy I would *never* buy this. That would be doing a huge disservice to one of the better records I've heard over the past few months. Spine-tingling, melodic punk in the vein of English bands like Southport, Blocko, or even earlier stuff like Visions Of Change and HDQ. If I were to pick a U.S. band, I'd say Reason To Believe, maybe? Octave guitar parts, amazing vocals, great recording and a really solid sound. Since getting this in the mail, it has been on constant repeat. I dunno how easy this French stuff is to get here, but I urge you at the very least to go to their bandcamp and have a listen. You won't be disappointed. —Tim Brooks (Chanmax, chanmaxrecords.com)

LOGAN GREENE ELECTRIC:

Dead Formats: CD

I heard Logan Greene acoustic long before I knew about Logan Greene Electric. The former is fine evidence of Logan's thoughtful songwriting and talent, but I'm that sort of boorish philistine who wishes that ninety-nine percent of the solo acoustic guys in punk would just get a drummer and plug in already. Needless to say, my discovery of Logan Greene's full-band incarnation was extremely gratifying. This latest batch of power pop punk songs recalls the best of poppy '90s emo

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without resorting to simple rehashing. They have their own thing going, but there's no denying that "Cognitive Emissions," with its unrelenting refrain of "Why can't you feel this way about me?" would be at home over a bad-day montage in one of those millennial teen movies with inexplicably killer soundtracks (remember Jimmy Eat World in *Never Been Kissed*?). The next song, "Cognitive Remissions," complements its companion with some Gin Blossoms jangle, something I could definitely stand making more of a comeback. There's a change of pace in the brooding "New Life," but *Dead Formats* is, for the most part, an expertly executed pop punk EP with just enough of the right references at the right times. Count me in for more like this. —Indiana Laub (Diet Pop, dietpoprecords.com)

LOVESORES, THE:

Focke-Wulf vs. Spitfire: 10"

Boy, do I love it when people in bands realize what they do well and just focus on doing it. I have absolutely no problem with a one trick pony as long as the trick is a good one. Focus and mastering a style seem to be things that are underappreciated in music these days, in favor of being diverse or constantly evolving. The Lovesores are the new band from Humpers singer Scott "Deluxe" Drake and they sound a lot like the Humpers, which is to say they rock like fuck. Few singers can do this mid-tempo type of rock'n'roll this well without being embarrassing or a

caricature, but Scott Drake pulls it off with ease. From Suicide Kings to Humpers to Vice Principals, and on through a couple of solo records and now the Lovesores, you cannot go wrong when looking for some damn fine rock'n'roll. I would prefer it not be delivered on a 10" record but on a 12" 45, but that is a minor quibble. I will now have to get on the stick and get the rest of the Lovesores discography, as I have been sleeping on this great RNR juggernaut. —Mike Frame (Hound Gawd!)

LOW CULTURE / NEEDLES/PINS:

Split: 7"

Low Culture radiate hook-laden tunes like a punk pop supernova. Everything I have ever loved about Shang-A-Lang and Marked Men are scrambled together to formulate these two songs, "Reservations" and "Don't Tell Me." Although the lively singing barely peaks over the rapidly strummed guitars and nearly lo-fi production, the vocals still support each song with their head-bobbing catchiness. The twists and turns of "Reservations" are brilliant, emphasizing the fact that Low Culture isn't simply another garage punk band: They are crafting thoughtful punk music for those of us who have heard it all before. Needles/Pins are the ideal companion to Low Culture's scrappiness as they are confident and awe-inducing. "Hateful" is an anthemic pop behemoth with more bravado and expressive crooning than a dozen other bands combined, while "Bored" is one of the best fuck-all

garage songs I've heard in years. ("I'm bored, motherfucker, and I just want to go home" is *the* motto for disaffected Generation Y.) By definition, this is a perfect split. Both bands are genius pop songwriters, and what better way to enjoy them but to listen, back to back, to some of their best efforts yet. —Sean Arenas (Dirtnap, dirtnaprecs.com)

LOW FORMS: Self-titled: 7"

Duluth, once a town famous for mummy doctors and iron-rich agate stones is now giving way to Low Forms—Sunday afternoon punk with gnarly bass throbs, steady beats, and no-frills buzz of a Scared Of Chaka or M.O.T.O. type. These are all a part of that vaporous Lake Superior mix that makes A side "Cherry Tigers" a beauty and the feel-good song of the spring for people who are high functioning but, I don't know, think there is nothing wrong with drinking in alleys once in a while on the way to a show. Or maybe just folks who loved *Rocket to Russia* but also like the idea of a singer with the melodic range of a Motowner. The B side "Pendulum Swings" ain't bad, but the other rollicker "They're Trying to Get Their Hands on Me," a track that Low Forms played on University of Minnesota's Radio K, is the one that makes me want them to hurry it up and bring on the album. —Jim Joyce (Tectonic Plates / Big Action)

LOWEST, THE: Self-titled: CD

Oh my, oh my, it smells like Milwaukee, ca. 1993... stale beer, cheap cigarettes,

and a basement show in the bowels of Riverwest, replete with gutter-bred punk rock mayhem. But I'm soooo wrong! These dudes are from Warsaw, Poland! I would not have guessed; this is much in the vein of early '90s Midwestern bottom-scrappers like Demise, F-, and Dis. This has got a good combination of mid-tempo fury and churning, sludgy desperation, all wrapped up in minor chords that lend an ominous and threatening quality to the whole thing. I'm a real sucker for this sound, but it's not often that I come across an example of it that sounds completely new (as this does) within this tried-and-true genre. I was in the middle of some sort of important work-related shit listening to this and I had to stop what I was doing and just listen, which doesn't happen as often as I'd like. Then I opened my eyes and I was standing in front of the stereo, screaming along with the songs, tasting my long-forgotten twenty-two-year-old's angst in my mouth again. Nice. —The Lord Kveldulfr (Pasazer)

M.O.T.O.: Chinese Rocks

(Or a Fistful of Maobacks): LP

Paul Caporino is more than the Master of the Obvious: He's the Pop Prince of Playful Punk and the Shaman of Silly. (Need proof? Look no further than "Magic Words," which has ricocheted in my head endlessly since the first time I heard it. Trust me. It'll take residence inside of your skull.) He's one of the hardest working songwriters in punk as he has been cutting gems

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for over three decades. However, in all that time, Caporino has remained a cult icon for garage punk connoisseurs; he's well overdue for world domination. On *Chinese Rocks*, M.O.T.O. adds fourteen more irreverent jams, all of which were recorded in Shanghai, to their already extensive back catalog. Highlights include "Get the Message" with its sweet vocal harmony, which softens Caporino's typically rambunctious yelp, accompanied by a pogo-inducing guitar hook. "Anxiety Comes and Goes" is an introspective sizzler with moody chords and Caporino singing, "You wanna seize the day in your head / The day is seizing you instead." Shortly after, "Crystallize My Penis" exchanges self-examination for a callus-forming guitar solo and unabashed goofiness. On "Riding on a Bullet Train," Caporino prophetically declares, "No one understands me here, so I feel right at home," as if to acknowledge his cult status. Oh, if only more folks could get hip to M.O.T.O., then the world just might be a slightly cooler place. If only... —Sean Arenas (Secret Mission)

MATT K. SHRUGG: *Let It Go: Cassette*
I've only heard of Matt Shrug through his release *Matt Shrug Goes Banana*, which is a sweet little flexi of Shrug covering The Bananas. But what I didn't know was that he was part of the trio The Pizzas (SAC) and was once a member of the Zodiac Killers from SF as well. Oh the internet is just ripe with information, and can cure ignorance in a matter of

seconds. Use it wisely, my friends. This tape features two songs: "Let It Go" and "No, Not the Sunrise," which loop albeit imperfectly throughout the tape—sometimes with a false start, and even a complete cut off—but eventually has two unfettered recordings, both of which are quite good. "Let It Go" starts with a sweet little riff, cleanly recorded without effects, yet somehow warbled by the production and perhaps the fact it's simply on tape (which is not a stellar medium). The vocals in both songs have been (I believe) harmonized similar to the Beatles "I Want to Hold Your Hand," and both songs have a snappy, early Beatles '60s sound. It's not all retro throwback here, though. Shrug brings a freshness to it all, and keeps things pertinent to what he's trying to do, which is just creating some sunny garage pop, with no frills, just skills. —Camille Reynolds (Charles Albright, matkshrugg@gmail)

MERCY KILLINGS: *Snuffed Out: 7" EP*
Another corker of an EP here chock full o' the kind of meaty hardcore that makes you just wanna go off and wreck shit up. Solid, driving, and just plain mean. Fans of Direct Control, Out Cold, and the like would do well to take note. —Jimmy Alvarado (Beach Impediment)

MIDNITE SNAXXX: *"Don't Wake Me Up" b/w "Pull Down the Shades": 7"*
Midnite Snaxxx is always a banker when it comes to Bobbyteens-style punk. This single is no exception. Raw punk'n'roll delivered with

attitude. I find the band essential in all forms. —Billups Allen (Total Punk, floridasdyng.com)

MODERNS, THE: *When She Gets Back: 7" EP*
Nothing warms the ol' cold, blackened heart than when a kick-ass obscurity pops outta the ether. Case in point, this release: originally recorded in 1979 and only now seeing release some thirty-five years later, this bad boy appears to be the only recorded evidence of a band featuring one Alec Bemis, who soon went on to found the respected L.A. punk/hardcore band Modern Warfare and the label Bemisbrain Records, best known for releasing the *Hell Comes To Your House* comp. The tracks bend towards the poppier sound of contemporaries like the Simpletones, or even Modern Warfare's earliest output, with the title track bearing an almost power pop feel and other two packing a bit more punky punch, and all of 'em being some righteous tuneage. I'm easily being conservative when I say this would be fetching some serious money had it been released back then, just as much for the quality of the tunes as for its rarity, but seem' as it's just seeing daylight now, folks have a chance to get in on the ground floor. Seein' as there are a scant 550 in existence, I recommend you start huntin' pronto. —Jimmy Alvarado (Feral Kid, feralkidrecords.com)

MOUTH READER: *Self-titled: 7"*
Just a touch of the floor tom bounce surrounded by a lot of that Audacity

psych. I imagine Mouth Reader practices in a furnished basement that still sports its Brady charm, wood paneled walls and green bubble glass hanging lamps. There's probably a readily available can of air freshener should mom open the stair doors and—judging from the corpse paint and swimwear sleeve art—there's also quite a bit of tomfoolery that goes on down in that basement. —Matt Seward (Pug Face, pugfacerecords.com)

MOVIE STAR JUNKIES: *Evil Moods: CD*
This garage/punk/blues outfit from Torino, Italy are reminiscent of Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds with all the moodiness, poetry, and better-than-your-average-garage-band musical ability to almost give the Grinderman a run for his money. (Almost. Let's not get crazy.) Someone get me an espresso and a cigarette. I want to find the smoky Roman catacomb where the Movie Star Junkies are playing next. —John Mule (Voodoo Rhythm, voodooorhythm.com)

MURMURS: *Bound: LP*
Fuckin' Murmurs. The surprise of last year's Awesome Fest. The schedule was off, I was a tad inebriated. I had no idea who I was watching, but I liked it. This is hangover opera—soaring, beautiful melodies being belted out in burly chaos. Epic, unforgiving, and dynamic. You're always only a minute away from another mind-blowing part. When I listen to *Bound*, I hear more than the record. I swear there's

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an orchestra tucked away in these grooves. It's a sound that's larger than itself. Bound by nothing, this record feels as free as the night air. Crisp and invigorating. —Daryl (Dead Broke)

NARCOLEPTICS: Self-titled: 7" EP

Disorder-styled hardcore—feedback, fuzz, howling, fast 'n' chaotic. The sound's a bit muffled, but they manage to make their point. —Jimmy Alvarado (Warthog Speak)

NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS: Recovery: LP

Okay, must refrain from showy displays of geekdom. This is a legitimate, authoritative magazine and...**HOLY SHIT, THIS FUGGIN' THING SMOKES!!!** Ahem. Sorry about that. As I was saying, there's a certain level of politesse one must maintain or risk besmirching one's reputation. Well above-average punk rock is embedded into both sides of this, their first proper full-length album, and...**SWEET MINTY JESUS, I'VE DIED AND GONE TO PUNK ROCK HEAVEN!!!** 'Scuze me, there.... I'm hearing shades of prime-era Legal Weapon—tell me "Painted And Gutted" doesn't hold its own against anything on *Death of Innocence*—mixed in with all the things that Off! is getting hyped to death over, and are delivering the latter at higher levels of sophistication and flat-out catchiness. Not to besmirch Keith 'n' his latest cabal of neo-retro-hardcore malcontents, but these kids are just on fire here **AND I'M BOUNCING OFF THE**

WALLS IN GLEEFUL ABANDON TO THIS FUCKER REPUTATION BE DAMNED OH MY DEAR MAHFÜ THIS THING IS SOOOO GODDAMNED AWESOME!!! Heh. My apologies. Anyway, is this worth the time and green of *Razorcake's* urbane, discerning readership? You bet yer sweet posterior it is, bucko. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

NEKRO DRUNK:

Tyrants of Toilet Music: CD

Thirty songs featured on this grindcore record. The longest song is slightly over two minutes. Most of the song titles are of questionable content. Not that this magazine is owned by Disney but "Cottage Cheese Cunt" and "Cuntaminated Cum" probably won't make it on the backyard BBQ playlist. I'm sure there is an audience for this somewhere, but this one is out of my wheelhouse. Pass. —Sean Koepenick (Headsplit, headsplitletrecords.blogspot.com)

NEVERMORES, THE:

Lock Your Doors: LP

There seems to be a serious Edgar Allan Poe theme going on with this band and record, from the band name to the graphics. At this point, that is at least preferable to a David Allan Coe theme and the trappings that might come with that. Looking more closely, I am seeing that this seems to be a recording from 1991, that one of the band members is named Gretchen Holtz, and the band is from Indiana. There is something rattling

around in my head about Gretchen from the band The Smears from that area. A little more research shows that it is the same person and this band appears to be pre-Smeas. The sound is along the same lines—garage punk with rough vocals, but this band is more lo-fi and features prominent organ. Real, real lo-fi. Fans of labels like Rat City, Crypt, and Bag Of Hammers would probably find a whole lot to like here. —Mike Frame (Magnetic South)

NEW FLESH, THE: The Absurd: LP

Punchy death rock-type punk stuff from a Bay Area outfit, featuring cats involved at some point with Deskonocidos, Neon Piss, and Vaaska. The tunes are dark in tone and the soaring guitars are in evidence, but they approach the tunes with an aggressive punk edge, so things are more like Ian Curtis fronting early TSOL than a self-absorbed wash of morose navel-lint picking. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

NEW ROCHELLES / THE WINDOWSILL:

Split: 7"

Hailing from the Netherlands with connection to Stardumb Records, The Windowsill spoon up vanilla, lethargic, forgettable Ramones-core. Thank Heavenly Dee Dee for the flip side! New Rochelles out-dumb the Queens divinity with sugary chants of "Joey's eating all the wheat germ" in the pop powerhouse of "Hey Pizza!" followed by the buzzsaw blue Mosrite attack of "I Don't Wanna Go Down to the Crawlspace." It's not "new," but these

Rochelles own it. —Matt Seward (Lost Youth, lostyouthrecords.com / Swamp Cabbage, swampcabbagerecords.com)

NO FAITH: Dead Weight: 7" EP

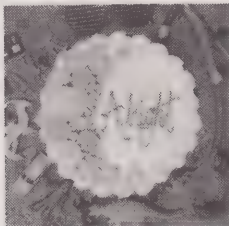
The EP begins with a low-end grumbling cycle looping over and over, punctuated with a high-pitched tone. Guttural Justin K. Broderick-style barking is buried deep underneath it. That leads into five impressive fast/slow, start/stop, humorless powerviolence rippers with pulverizing percussion. The same JKB-style vox are pervasive throughout, though there is a second vocalist who unleashes his ferocious yell from time to time. The front is rounded out with another loop with those guttural vocals eerily low in the mix. The EP's eponymous track fills out the other side. As its title implies, it sludges quite a bit, right before it ascends into a short, explosive blast, and then returns to the sludge and drones out. Good stuff. —Vincent (Clean Plate / vendettarecords.wordpress.com)

NO LOVE: "Dogs/Wolves"

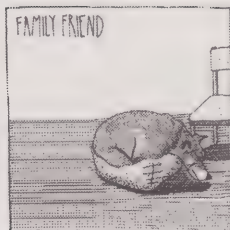
b/w "Bad Things": 7"

Fuck. Yes. Sick licks, fierce female vocals, and an unstoppable rhythm section. This band rules. With veteran precision they hotwire the early L.A. punk sound and drive it to the hardcore show. I could listen to a lot more than two songs of this. *A lot more!* If you're looking to fill the hole created by the recently disbanded Neighborhood Brats, check out No Love. —Daryl (Sorry State)

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NO MORE ART: Sorrows of Youth: LP

Wished for a full-length after hearing one o' their singles, here it is, and it's a doozy, kid. Stomping mid-tempo pop that sounds like it was dished out by a band that'd be just as happy to kick the shit outta ye as put nice notes in your ears. The slashing, textured downstroke-guitar work at times recalls "Potential Suicide" era Black Market Baby in all its minor chord glory, but, on the whole, this just pile-drives its way into your noggin and into your heart. I'd hoped they'd deliver something special with a bit more time to impress, and they've done so in spades here. —Jimmy Alvarado (Rock Star, rockstarrecords.de)

NOCNE SZCZURY: 1980: 7" EP

Nocne Szczury were a short-lived punk band local to the small seaside town of Wladyslawowo, Poland from 1976 to 1982. A brief interview transcription reveals their early influences to be that of the standard European contemporaries, such as the Sex Pistols, the Clash, and UK Subs, although these recordings, at times, owe more to the darkness of early Joy Division and post-punk. The songs on this record appear to be taken from a live performance and have that same godawful, yet, endearing Germs' "Sex Boy" sound quality. Don't go searching the *Killed by Death* section at the record store or Discogs just yet. As is typical with a lot of KBD style bands, the obscurity factor doesn't always equate to essential listening. Therefore this record serves more as a snapshot of

a small punk town's proudest moments than an undiscovered nugget of Ebay gold. —Juan Espinosa (Pasazer, pasazer.pl / Underground Factory, xfactoryx.blogspot.com)

NOFX:

Backstage Passport Soundtrack: CD

It kind of blows my mind that NOFX is still churning out meaningful music after some thirty-odd years in the game. On this CD the band delivers up fourteen tracks of the band's patented blend of wry social commentary and punk rock fire. As a bonus, you get a tasty Dickies cover. Some of this stuff has seen release before in the band's 7" of the month club, but that shouldn't stop you from picking up this convenient compilation. —Garrett Barnwell (Fat)

OH MY SNARE!: Hoyeste Gang: LP

Hot damn! All right, so my standard reaction to a Leatherface comparison is one of doubt and disinterest. And typically, rightfully so: more tuneless, derivative, gruff-vocalized nonsense that is entirely unrecognizable from the legions of clones doing the same disgraceful crud. So when I say that Montreal's somewhat-oddly-named Oh My Snare! sounds quite a bit like Sunderland's favorite sons, I mean it in the most enthusiastic and beautiful way. Main vocalist and guitarist Jorel certainly has his Stubbs down to a science: a gravel so thick that some of the heart-wrenching melodies only reveal themselves in time. Combined

with bassist Lily's amazing, almost Cinder Block-meets-Quin-twins-like voice and guitarist Dan's quite melodic delivery, Oh My Snare! packs a wallop that could very well be the most welcome addition to the post-Boat canon since some bearded Floridians first dropped *Fuel for the Hate Game*. Not to be so easily pigeonholed, OMS! also injects a hearty dose of Gilman-heyday flavor, hardcore-tinged gang singalongs and a sincerity and *joie de vivre* that is wonderfully typical of French Canada. Fans of any of the above namedrops (and, y'know, any of Rugger Bugger's more melodious output, most of the Snuffy Smile releases, essentially the entire first half of the Lookout! catalog) should absolutely not hesitate to check out this criminally brief LP. So, so great. —Dave Williams (Say-10, say-10.com / Sick Scene)

OUTTACONTROLLER / PINK WINE:

Outtawine: 7"

Do you like your punk poppy, skuzzy, and Canadian? Well, if you do, chances are these bands aren't new to your ear holes. The recently revived Young Modern Records dive head first into the vinyl game, after years of releasing music in the era of CDs. Outtacontroller blast off with two tracks, which I'm betting are outtakes from their P.Trash debut LP *Don't Play Dumb*, given the sound of the recordings. "I Gave Up on Weezer" has a silly title, but it's a rager of a track. Pink Wine's side's no different—although I believe their

cuts on this are more recent—scrappy garage/pop punk that reminds me of the Vindictives. (A compliment of the highest order.) Both bands have stellar debut LPs that are more than worthy of your time. Oh, this here piece of wax is no runner-up. Not sure what the scum stats are on this sucker, but there are at least some on clear vinyl. A solid, four-track 45. —Steve Adamyk (Young Modern, youngmodern.ca)

OVERCHARGE: Accelerate: LP

Ripping motörpunk from Italy! If you're not familiar with this very specific genre, it's Discharge-meets-Motörhead. That's it. This territory has been adequately covered in the past by bands like Inpsy and Midnight, two of the best. Overcharge do it well, if a little monotonously. If you're not too concerned with distinguishable songs' and just want to crush beers and rock while wearing your patch-covered denim vest and mirrored aviators, this record provides plenty of amped-up energy to do just that. —Chad Williams (Dead Beat, dead-beat-records.com)

PALLBEARER:

Foundations of Burden: CD / 2 x LP

Pallbearer's second full-length is another exploration of hopeful doom metal. I'm not entirely sure how they do it, but this Little Rock four-piece is able to take the normally gloomy, morose sound of doom metal and insert bits of optimism in the songs. They do this through the use of guitar solos ("The Ghost I Used to Be") and piano

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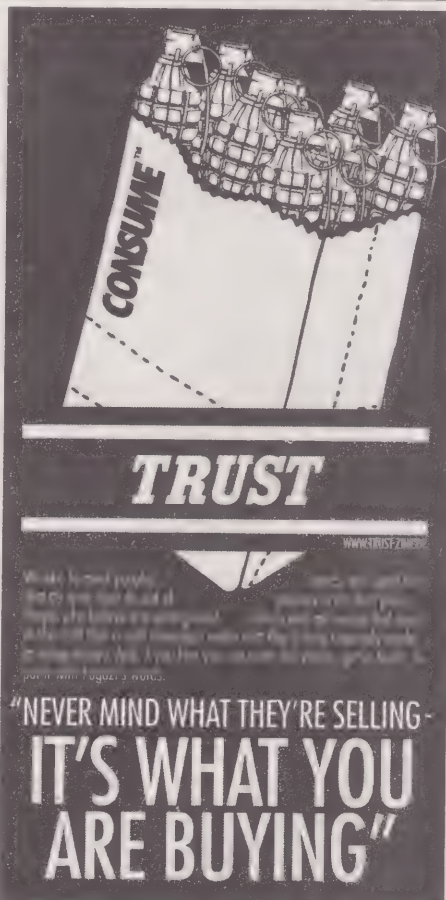
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("Watcher in the Dark," "Ashes"), and, at times, the melodies flow together to the point where it's actually *beautiful*, which is something I never thought I'd say about a doom metal album. The vocals still sound a lot like Ozzy Osbourne, but a couple of the other guys in the band are also providing some vocals as well, which gives an even greater depth to the sound. *Foundations of Burden* may only be six songs, but it's fifty-five minutes of music, which makes for a real engaging listening experience. It's one of those albums that is great to turn on, put headphones in your ears, and just let the sound wash over you. —Kurt Morris (Profound Lore, profoundlorerecords.com)

PEDRO SAYS HI:

The Creep-Over: Cassette

Extraordinarily bizarre vocals are the standout feature of Pedro Says Hi. Oddly reminiscent of the three Doc Corbin Dart solo albums. If those releases were lo-fi, this is easily recommendable to anyone into strange singers. The songs are catchy and the lyrics are poised to confuse the listener in the best ways possible. I say "hi" back to Pedro, even if his voice is frightening. —Art Ettinger (Let's Pretend)

PENN'S WOODS:

What Good We Do: Cassette

I'm sure I've been accused of being "the girl who cried Leatherface" before, but, really, this time I mean it. Take a bit of the gravel and rasp out of Frankie Stubb's voice and you'd have

Penn's Woods. And not at all in a bad way; it's not like they're totally biting their sound. The melodies, lyrics, and cadence are all their own—but you can tell that these guys grew up with what is my favorite British band, right behind The Smiths. As soon as I put this on, I got those heartstring tugs and swelling of emotions, just as if I ran into an old friend or an unrequited love. These are my preferred bristles of the wide brush of pop punk that we paint on countless bands. And Penn's Woods makes me want to blast *What Good We Do* just as much as *Mush*—falling in step with every beat and belting out every word until I'm as hoarse and raspy as Stubbs. Flowery language and poetic waxing aside, this album very well will make my Best of 2015 list. —Kayla Greet (Secret Pennies)

PEPES, LOS: *For Everyone: LP*

Catchy, danceable power pop punk from these four Londoners. Purists, relax. They stay true to their influences. Power pop is a traditionalists' game, and Los Pepes have the ball. I imagine their live show is how they seal the deal, so go see 'em if they play your village. —Daryl (Wanda)

PLASTIC CAVES: *Dispossessed: 7"*

PLASTIC CAVES: Suicide Floor: 7"

From what I'm able to glean, this is a band hailing from Reno. The *Dispossessed* single appears to be their first vinyl release with a limited pressing of three hundred copies. The title track is a nice bit of aggressive,

new wavy post-punk, and the flip, "Cold Remains," takes a slower, drone-based approach. Solid single all the way 'round. *Suicide Floor* is single-sided with only one track and is limited to 116 copies. Tune's a bit more brooding than the two on the other single, but still some choice work. Definitely some good things going on here. Hope they're working on a full-length. —Jimmy Alvarado (Plastic Caves, dsix.bandcamp.com)

PLASTIC CAVES: *Self-titled: Cassette*

I cannot begin to imagine trying to be goth in a high desert town like Reno: makeup melting under a hot sun and black leather sweltering even under the best of circumstances in the summer. You've gotta choose your flags wisely under such a hot sun: lapel pins, the odd black T-shirt. Perhaps it's exposure to a harsh environment that makes Plastic Caves so effective and ultimately awesome: there are certainly post-punk/goth tropes throughout their eponymous debut, but they're making intelligent choices about their presentation rather than blindly going whole hog. The stylistic overtures which the band choose—familiar guitar tones, urgency driven by an insistent rhythm section—further the songs, never thrown in for their own sake. Of particular note are the vocals, which are neither heavily affected or overemoted. So often bands showing promise in the early '80s post-punk department boast singers who showboat and ultimately pilot the SS Spooky into an iceberg of

overindulgence—not here. The focus is on the group as an organism which delivers music (and well), rather than some theater wannabe with a cape trying to be sinister and/or spooky. *Faith-era* Cure and Bauhaus are good starting points in a discussion which quickly branches into unblazed territory. Recommended. —Michael T. Fournier (D6, dsix.bandcamp.com)

PLATEAUS: *Wasting Time: 10" EP*

Let me just state first how glorious the pastel splatter starburst pattern on this vinyl 10" is. Its front cover plays this up front and center with a cutout design and the contrast of some dark, strange yeti type creature. I suppose it adds some intrigue. Plateaus have an unseasoned vernal sound—a fresh mix of pop with the stoner glaze of, say, White Fang, but much more clean and polished. Both "Wasting Time," and the faster "Look Out," have melodic guitar that arches over the underlying flat vocals, leaving wisps of echoes, laden with fuzzed-out bass, and some pretty sweet riffs. "Air Head" is a bit more '60s garage pop, with a solid bass line, warped surf guitar, and weird, nasally vocals. It's a damn good song that gets the hips moving. —Carmyle Reynolds (Mt. St. Mtn., mtstmntn.com)

PLEASURE CROSS: *Self-titled: 12" EP*

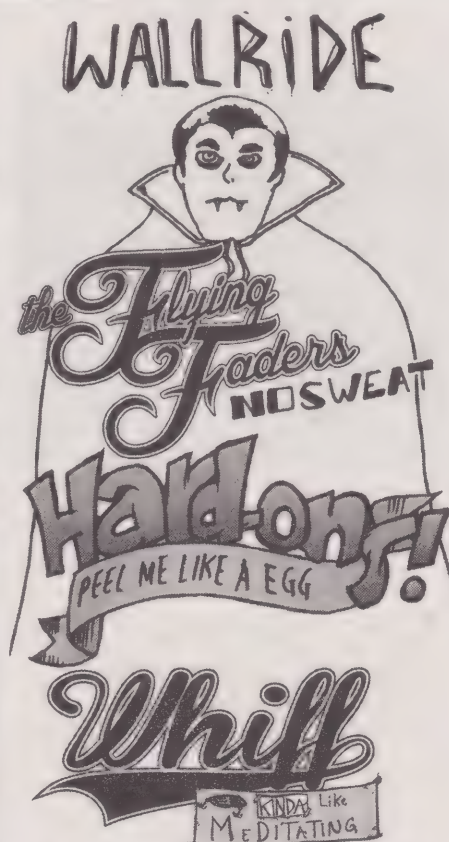
Pleasure Cross certainly appear to worship the early Earache catalog, as evidenced by a non-stop beat down of thrashing grindcore, demonic vocals, and some serious guitar tremolo



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bar bending. Imagine, if you will, Heresy's *Never Healed* as interpreted by members of Napalm Death and Bolt Thrower. Seattle powerhouse Walls disbanded as a result of vocalist August Alston's departure from the group to focus on Pleasure Cross. Shed a tear as you bang your head and pump your fist. —Juan Espinosa (Iron Lung)

PORNO POP-UPS: Self-titled: Cassette

Talk about a Google search wormhole... deal with looking for a band and label whose primary words are "porno" and "fuck." The Porno Pop-Ups hail from Finland and keep warm by pushing "Record" on a boombox and wailing away in an echo chamber. The groove is repetitive, loud, and barely held together by their shambolic drum beat. It's refreshing in its pure brattiness—in a genre that has been overwhelmed with Guitar Center clerks playing psychedelia... maybe someone will pay their way to Gonerfest. —Matt Seward (Fuck CDs)

POTENTIAL LUNATICS, THE:

Dizzy Spells and Garden Talk: CD

From the handclaps to the noisy teenage freak-outs, Long Beach brother and sister duo The Potential Lunatics is fucking adorable. Emma Simons-Araya evokes an angrier, more contentious Bethany Cosentino (Best Coast). She delivers stunning vocals that travel effortlessly from breathy whispers, to angelic singing, to gritty, riot grrrl growls that don't sound like a toddler having a temper tantrum—

sorry Kathleen Hanna. If legend is to be believed, Emma coerced her brother Isaac into drumming, but he seems stoked about it now, choke slamming the rhythm section and backup vocals like a badass sass dragon. The real star of *Dizzy Spells and Garden Talk* is the youthful freshness of Emma's witty, socially conscious lyrics. Her brand of feminism doesn't posture or ask you nicely; it punches you in the throat and then laughs at you for crying. —Kelley O'Death (Self-released)

PRETTY PRETTY: *Leather Weather: 7"*

Pretty Pretty play retro doo wop-esque pop rock. With the lo-fi hum of the vinyl, the Midwestern band conveys a majorly West Coast vibe. However, their 7" *Leather Weather* escapes the tedious monotony so easy to fall into with that style of music. Instead, Pretty Pretty successfully injects variety into their approach, making for a really fun listening experience. The first song has a nineties, grungy, Cranberries sound—the type of song you might find on a *Daria* soundtrack—whereas the other songs were more twee and apt for a foot-tapping, head-bobbing good time. —Ashley Ravelo (Let's Pretend, letspretendrecords.com / Mandible, mandiblerecords.com, mandiblerecords@gmail.com)

PRIMITIVE HEARTS: *High and Tight: LP*

I take it the title of *High and Tight* isn't just referring to the haircut being given to the youngster on the cover, but also to the state of mind of the barber and

said youngster (drunk and, well, high).

This album sits on the line of lo-fi-ish garage pop and pop punk. The singer does a good, bratty Nobunny vocal (if it isn't actually Nobunny himself... hmm). Bands of this ilk these days seem to shoot for that Nobunny vocal sound, whereas many pop punk bands from the mid-late '90s heyday of pop punk tried too hard to sound like Ben Weasel. Songs are catchy, singalong-y, and have that power chord pinky tapping riff that I'll always dig. This record was released by three different labels! —Sal Lucci (Resurrection, getresurrected.com / P.Trash, ptrashrecords.com / FDH, fdhmusic.com)

PRINCE: Self-titled: 7"

Second self-titled EP from Prince. I think one of 2014's biggest upsets was this band not getting sued. We were all anxiously awaiting that debacle and, unfortunately, it never happened. Well, either way, this band fuckin' kills live. And their records are pretty good, too. Strong-arm punk pop that sounds both haphazard and meticulously constructed. Another shining example of how one can write fun, bouncy songs about how goddamn miserable they are and have good time doing it! —Daryl (Drunken Sailor / Dead Broke / No Breaks / A.D.D.)

P.R.O.B.L.E.M.S.: *Hit and Run: 7"*

I'm not a sophisticated music aficionado. I like what I like, and sometimes what I like is kind of stupid. For example, one thing that always

turns me on is when a song starts with a perfectly timed guttural shout. Not a long shout, just a staccato "Uh!"—like the singer got punched in the gut right when the recording started. The first track on this record, a great, high energy, Humpers-lovin' rocker, starts with a solid "Uh!" But it doesn't end there! The singer drops a couple more well-placed "Uh!"s throughout. It's pretty marvelous. Now if there was a proper whistle in there somewhere, I'd be all set. —MP Johnson (Doomtown Sounds, problemspdx.com)

PUSHIN' IT 2 THE LIMIT:


Self-titled: Cassette

The band name and the tattoo cover art definitely gave me pause. But this is not a soundtrack to a film about athletic apparel directed by Fred Durst. That should be made clear. This is bouncy, charming, relentless pop punk with some dark, weird guitar-bass interplay and goofy humor, i.e. they introduce each song by shouting the name of the song in unison. Kind of a Shonen Knife-y thing to do. I feel like if you had a question about a cartoon, any cartoon, they could answer it. Check out "That's All Murder She Wrote" for starters, and then go from there if you need to. —Matt Werts (Self-released)

RADIOACTIVITY:

"Danger" b/w "Why": 7"

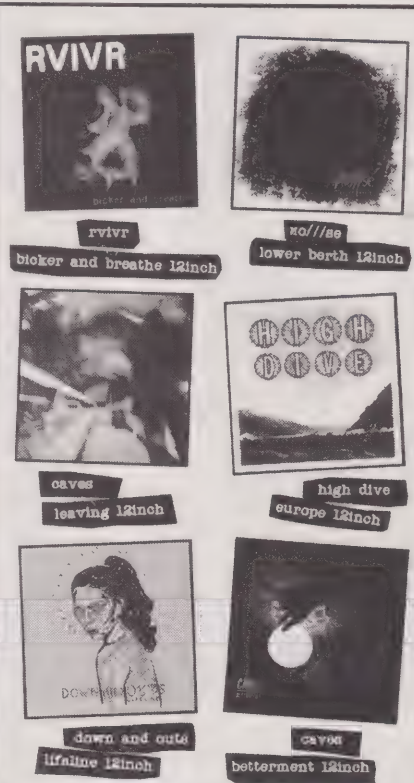
Few would argue with the fact that Marked Men are one of the greatest punk bands of all time, a band in which Jeff Burke and Mark Ryan are both



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alumni. Few would argue against the absolute brilliance of Radioactivity's self-titled debut LP. Ultimately, new Radioactivity songs make me buzz with electricity. Well, here they are, and they are a step in a *slightly* different direction. The melodies are reserved, thoughtful, and succinct when compared with the sugar-y bombast of "Don't Try" or "World of Pleasure." None of this is to say that these gents have slowed down, mellowed out, or stopped wrecking their wrists with rapid down-picking. Rather, these two songs require listening on repeat and active engagement. You are forced to turn off the lights, turn up the volume, and ensure your headphones are on snug, as the choruses aren't as obvious, but the payoff is just as gratifying. The layers of complexity reveal songs equally as brilliant as any by Marked Men. Especially "Why," a languid and hypnotizing opus, which suggests the influence of Mind Spiders. These two songs potentially foreshadow a more textural Radioactivity on future LPs. If so, I welcome the change. —Sean Arenas (Secret Mission)

RAMONES, THE: WBUF FM Broadcast, Buffalo, NY, February 8th 1979: CD

Recently unearthed recording from the *Road to Ruin* tour. The packaging is nice but the quality control is a bit lacking. Right under the brief blurb on the back that states that Marky was on drums by the time this was recorded is a picture of the band with Tommy! There are four more

pictures on the inside, which split the difference between Tommy and Marky. I am surprised there is not a Richie era picture inside. But fact-checking aside, the sound quality is top-notch. This album has been digitally remastered, although the details are again fuzzy on that count. There is a *Rolling Stone* article from 1979 that quotes Joey's father, which was interesting from a historical context. Nothing really out of the ordinary in the set-list, but it is twenty-three songs. If you love The Ramones, I'm sure even Designated Dale would not be "against it!" —Sean Koeppenick (Keyhole UK)

REAL ENEMY: *Life with the Enemy*: LP

Real Enemy was an early—some say the first—Pittsburgh hardcore band, active 198____. Though they never managed to release any vinyl, they did manage a cassette demo, and this is a vinyl reissue of that demo. The music here is a prime slice of early '80s Northeast hardcore that just smokes—tight, taut, zippy, and delivered with purpose and intent. The packaging here is flat-out gorgeous, with a faithful reproduction of the original demo's cover on the front of the album, inserts, download card, and a fold out with a shit-ton of liner notes. —Jimmy Alvarado (Mind Cure)

REAL KIDS: *Shake... Outta Control*: LP

The first "real" Real Kids album since 1977? I always considered Norton Records' *No Place Fast* a Real Kids album, but I guess it's not, as it consists

of Real Kids and Taxi Boys recordings. Some of the songs on *Shake...* have been floating around since Real Kids founder John Felice was planning the second album way back in the late '70s. Even before I heard this record was coming out, I would often wonder what happened to the album the Real Kids was working on in the late '90s/early '00s. So, what to say about *Shake...*? It doesn't suck! But is that really something to say, when the first thought that came to my mind was "this doesn't suck?" Really, it's reductive and oafish of me to write that, but I did think those thoughts. The recordings are good and warm, a much better mix than on the *Down to You* EP from 1999 (something about the drums on those recordings will always bother me). John Felice's voice has held up pretty well. He was never a good "singer," but that's not the point. It's just that sometimes I feel he's reaching for notes he can't hit. What Felice *really* is a good songwriter: the man can write a hook, he's got a signature guitar sound that any Real Kids fan can pick up on immediately, and he does the heart-on-sleeves thing but doesn't make it feel cheesy. There's an updated version of "Common at Noon," slowed down and with extra instruments that improves on the original. The back cover photo should really have been the front cover. —Sal Lucci (Ugly Pop)

REMANBRAN: *Drawing Out*: Cassette

Mallory Watje is the singer/songwriter responsible for Remambran and you

should thank her for it. With Indiana Laub on bass and Johnny Yugoslavia / Paul Rey on drums, each of these ten tracks puts forth a dreamy quality that floats around your head like a happy cloud. The songs are all very pretty—they have wonderful chord progressions and a rhythm section that can be either rapid fire force or soft and gentle while the wistful riffs carry you away. The vocal styling Watje has perfected is so unique and almost exotic from anything I've heard. In no way do I mean this negatively, but her voice is somewhat warped and warbly sounding, with a tinge of Bjork's accent to it. As if the magnetic tape on the cassette got stretched out, but just on the vocals. It makes for this gorgeous cadence that guides the instruments through on this mystic journey of tunes about feelings and relationships. "Get Thru the Nite" is my favorite track on the album because it really runs the entire gamut of what this group is capable of in just three minutes. You'd be hard pressed to find another band like this. I don't even know what to compare them to. Do yourself a favor and check out something new and refreshing. —Kayla Greet (Secret Pennies)

ROBOT REPAIR:

***Never Trust a Human*: Cassette**

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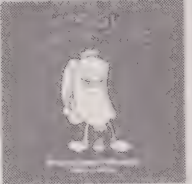





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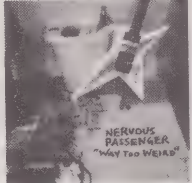
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ROUGHNECK RIOT: *Out of Anger*: CD
Looking at this CD, I got the feeling that this might be a CD full of Samuel Adams beer commercial songs. Well, I was right. If the whole English/Irish/folk-punk thing is your bag, then drink deep my friend. Given the parameters of what they are trying to accomplish, this isn't too bad. The lyrics are a little deeper than the familiar workingman themes, which tend to riddle most

SEE YOU IN HELL: *Jed: 12" EP*
Everything I've heard from these guys so far has been pretty good. Live? Whoa! You must see them live! I made the trek down to Anaheim last year to catch them, and it was well worth the drive. They more than delivered on my expectations. From the very first song to the very last, they owned the room. All the touring they've done has turned them into a force to be reckoned with. Musically, they're a mix of mid to quick tempos with solid musicianship that holds it all together. The drums thrash and bash, though never really letting things tip over into a mess

SHOCK: *Shockproof* 1976-1979: LP
At this point, Artifix has set itself as the premier reissue label for Southern California-based punk, and this latest release further solidifies that rep. Shock are one of the early L.A. punk bands, active 1976-79.

SICK THOUGHTS: *Coming Over: 7" EP* Comparisons with the late, great Jay Reatard are inevitable, not so much in the sounds, as much as a teenager in his bedroom making unearthly sounds. Sick Thoughts is Drew Owen from Baltimore. At seventeen he has already amassed quite a catalogue and shared the stage with more than a few great bands. He sounds like later butchered GG Allin or some of the more difficult Killed By Death obscurities like the Sick Things. Not as catchy as say the Atchungs, but in the same vein. Along with Total Punk records, Going Underground is fast becoming one of the top purveyors of the new wave of garage. —Tim Brooks (Going Underground)

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SLICE OF LIFE: Love and a Lamp-Post: CD

Two affirmatives and one negative: Yes, this is Steve Ignorant's latest musical endeavor; yes, the lion's share of musicians making up the rest of the band are folks who joined him on his "Last Supper" tour a few years back; no, my spiky-headed homie, this sounds nothing like Crass, Conflict, Stratford Mercenaries, or any other band he's been in prior. Hell, if you base such things on sonic equivalencies and definitions that have been hammered home over several decades, most wouldn't even define this as a "punk" album. Gone are Steve's chord-shredding vocals, the staccato guitars and martial drums, and in their place are soft pianos, acoustic guitar, upright bass, the odd trumpet harmonies, and ::GASP!:: the man actually singing, thick Cockney accent 'n' all. Often more contemplative and introspective, but no less angry, bitter, and outspoken, the songs get their point across more effectively via personal snapshots than Crass's more obvious finger-wagging moments. It's an ambitious effort—part singer-songwriter, part-Billy Bragg activist, part storyteller—and one that will no doubt polarize the legions of fans expecting him to blast them against the back wall. As anyone with some knowledge of the breadth of what once fell under the umbrella definition of "anarcho-punk" can tell ye, though, this falls right in line with that scene's "express yourself how thou wilt" mentality. Is it my personal cup o' tea? Not sure quite yet; my initial reaction is "no," but I can see myself

quickly warming to the "art" and sheer chutzpah, not to mention that, on the whole, they're not terrible songs in the least. Would I recommend it? Most definitely, especially to the average punker 'cause, let's be honest here, if this record challenges your sensibilities, you need to play it until you realize that's exactly what "punk" is supposed to do. —Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

SLOW DEATH, THE / KYLE KINANE: Split: 7"

Very few live comedy/studio band split records out there, so this is notable. Kyle Kinane tells the true story of driving past a skunk with his head stuck in a mayonnaise jar, and the ensuing efforts to save said skunk. He's a natural storyteller, and though I didn't laugh while I listened, I'm sure I would've had I been there in the club for the retelling. The Slow Death does a couple faithful (Young) Pioneers covers. I prefer the originals, particularly "Fuck the Labor Pool," but they give both songs a slightly more pronounced, measured, hearty Americana sweep, which works. If there's something to connect people who bought the *Inside Llewyn Davis* soundtrack to people who ordered records from Vermiform, this could be it. —Matt Werts (Silver Sprocket / Rad Girlfriend)

SOGGY CREEP: Worry Lines: Cassette

Soggy Creep might be waiting for you in a dark alley, the corner they've been hiding in littered with butts mixing in the oily, swirling rain puddles. Dark,

tension-filled tunes meant to conjure nightmares. Die Kreuzen's *October File* for 2015. You get four songs on matching yellow cassette and pro cover with a fantastic band portrait drawing on the interior (unfortunately, no lyrics). Really great release and limited to one hundred, so get on it. —Matt Seward (Self-released)

SON OF A GUN: No Bread: LP

As decent as this is, it's hard to see it as anything other than Ty Segall/King Tuff/Burger Records run-off. But if you're young or drunk or high enough, does that matter? What are your thoughts on fun? Do you like rock'n'roll? Under what conditions? Really ask yourself. —Matt Werts (Tall Pat, tallpatrecords.com)

SORE EYELIDS: For Now: LP

Emo-rock with a lonely, reverby sound, like the band is playing at the end of a sad tunnel. The guitars twinkle, then get crashing and punky at the right times. From Sweden. Like Mineral's grimy little brother. —Chris Terry (Tell Wilhelm.com)

SPOONBOY / GOODBYE PARTY: Split: 7"

I've seen Spoonboy play. One man tour. It did not prepare me for a full band release. "Great Mistake Maker" hits like the Street Eaters' side of their Severance Package split—rollicking bass hopping around through sunshine and grit. And now that you're all amped up, you get a Springsteen/Ted Leo

swaggering storyline about "Linus & Me." Two songs may be the perfect dose and you might find a little freedom in letting yourself love these tracks. The Goodbye Party is Beach Boys garage and the Spoonboy side will prevent me from ever remembering them. Clear red vinyl. —Matt Seward (Silver Sprocket)

STAY CLEAN JOLENE: Self-titled: LP

It'd be easy to simply compare Stay Clean Jolene to Leatherface, Broccoli, Snuff, and Annalise and leave it at that. And, truthfully, it wouldn't be too far off the mark. Stay Clean Jolene absolutely boils down the best of what its English predecessors has given us into a wonderfully concise, immediately memorable package. But there's more at work here than all of that. There's an accessibility that the aforementioned legends often lacked. A knack for wheat-over-chaff that pummels with hooks, at times reminiscent of Hot Water Music's *Caution* or perhaps even The Loved Ones' *Keep Your Heart*: big, succinct anthems that expertly balance grit and sheen. Here's hoping that Stay Clean Jolene can make a deservedly huge splash on both sides of the pond, because this is a band and a record that should appeal to all walks under our giant punk umbrella. —Dave Williams (Dead Broke / Drunken Sailor / Eager Beaver / JSNTGM / Rad Girlfriend)

SVFFER: Lies We Live: LP

Holy shit! This is some monstrously heavy poverviolence! Not my



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subgenre of choice, but the brutally thick and clear production makes this infinitely more listenable than most powerviolence records. And with blast beats *not* employed every single moment of every song, this record is about the most dynamic I've ever heard in this corner of the hardcore world. Bleak and black, well played and perfectly presented, this German band is clearly firing on all cylinders. —Chad Williams (Vendetta, vendettarecords.de / Per Koro, perkoro.com, info@perkoro.com / Halo Of Flies, halooffliesrecords.com)

TIM VERSION, THE: **Ordinary Life: LP and 7" EP**

In a more righteous world all of our government's money isn't spent on funding global wars and protecting crooked corporations and politicians, the poor have a fighting chance, loves flows freely, and The Tim Version is played loud on the airwaves for all to hear. It doesn't hurt to dream. I've been a fan of this band for years and have always held their albums and songwriting in high regard, but with *Ordinary Life* they've released what I consider to be, far and away, their best record to date. Over the last fifteen years The Tim Version has fine-crafted their own unique sound, mixing elements of punk, country, and classic rock. Dirty guitar solos that cut through, a backbone of steady rhythms and blistering drums—one of the best drummers you'll hear in a punk band—and Russ Van Cleave's

arm-raised catchy singalongs and confessional lyrics that balance darkness and hope with words that you can go straight to the edge with. "Nobody thinks that nothing ain't worth anything. Well I wish it was. Nobody understands the possibilities. But I've seen it done." And somehow they're able to transition from an upbeat punk tune to a slow, beautiful, and haunting country gem like "Holidays and Birthdays" or "Die in Yer Sleep" with complete ease. What really sets The Tim Version apart from a lot of other bands, though, is a true underlying sense of honesty. There are no illusions hiding in those grooves of vinyl. This album was some five years in the making. I'm a believer that creativity, whether it's music, writing, or art, takes time to craft and a lot of sacrifice. As age creeps up on us there are more obstacles: family, careers, and money. Somehow we have to learn to juggle it all, and yet still try to be true to the sound. "It is fun, but it ain't always easy." Dreams about the dead, fishing, company men, the grind of work, drugs, honky-tonks, depression, weak birds, and cheap motels. It's a world I can relate to and *Ordinary Life* is music we can all find solace in. —Seth Swaaley (No Idea, noidearecords.com)

TIT: Self-titled: 12" EP

Dark synth stuff from members of Digital Leather and The Hussy that at times sounds like Tubeway Army fronted by Marvin the Paranoid

Android. Kinda dig it, I gotta say. Limited to an evil 666 copies. —Jimmy Alvarado (FDH)

TOTAL ABUSE: Looking for Love: 7" EP

There's nothing like time that'll start fucking with a band's sound if they happen to live long enough. For some, time—it'll send 'em down a road that dead ends in a dank cul-de-sac of ego and wretchedly overblown output. For others, it sends 'em in weirder country. My recollection of the last thing I heard from these cats, their *Sex Pig* EP, was an exercise in spazzed-out, zippy hardcore. If this release is any indication, their evolution has resulted in a marked shift into lower-gear tempos and a deconstruction of their previous take on the hardcore template anchored on relentlessly dissonant and caustic instrumentation. The results are an impressive three songs stripped down to the point of almost coming off more as a potential soundtrack for primal scream therapy than "rock music." If this is the road time is sending 'em down, here's hoping they manage to keep on it a good spell more, 'cause odds are shit's only gonna get much, much more interesting the further they travel. —Jimmy Alvarado (Deranged)

TRUST FUND / JOANNA GRUESOME: **Split: 12" EP**

Trust Fund took me a couple listens to warm to. I like the unpolished style, and the vocals, when they harmonize, are great. They can get a little too precious sometimes, but then the majority of

the time they're pretty good, whether it's a guitar buzzing with distortion, or the harmonized vocals, or even when whoever is taking the lead vocal really sings and doesn't do the spoken thing. The way they sing in "Scared" is great, with the backing vocals, how they play off one another and stay on point when the song changes tempo. The horn that comes in around the middle of "No Pressure" makes the song! It adds a little extra character and emphasizes the morose tone of the song. The more I listen to their side, the more it grows on me. If they did a tour of playing only living rooms, I bet it would be great. I have to admit this is the first time I've listened to Joanna Gruesome, which only shows I'm lazy, as I tend to check out just about anything connected to Slumberland records. This is the kind of pop I really like. It's tuneful, sugary sweet in parts, noisy, slightly jagged, and a combination of dreamy guitars and dreamy female vocals. "Jerome (Liar)" starts off their side very upbeat, then they transition into "Satan (Desire Edition)" which is downbeat and a touch noisier. I like the bit of distortion that is put on the vocals, and when the song suddenly picks up and gets a little heavier, I'm over the moon. The vocals on "Coffee Implosion" are perfect. Songs for listening to when winter starts to melt into spring. —M.Avrq (HHBTM, hhbtm.com)

TURNSTILE: Non-Stop Feeling: LP

Ahhh shiiiit! I've been waiting impatiently for this bad boy to drop and



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daaang—I ain't disappointed. *Non-Stop Feeling* is heavy, groovy, catchy East Coast hardcore that grabs from all corners of the genre—specifically its slightly more esoteric subsets. I'm getting vibes from latter-day Underdog, *Progression*-era Snapcase, *Quickness*-period Bad Brains, early-to-mid aughts favorites like Mental, Lion Of Judah, and grooves straight out of Biohazard's prime (...and, dare I say, some early Red Hot Chili Peppers jams). Overall, Turnstile has more than delivered on the promise of its first EPs and released an incredibly unique, exciting hardcore record that demonstrates a profound knowledge of its genre and personal passions that are certainly more the exception than the rule in modern hardcore. Phenomenal. —Dave Williams (Reaper)

UKE HUNT: Self-titled: CD

I like Me First And The Gimme Gimmes. I like ukuleles. I don't like them in combination. This is Spike Slawson's ukulele cover band with a collection of exceedingly hokey renditions of tunes culled from respectable artists such as The Kinks, David Bowie, Depeche Mode, and The Carpenters. Yes, you will think The Carpenters are respectable after you hear this record. He is joined by Lagwagon bassist Joe Raposo and Jamin Barton, who played sax on the last Gimme Gimmes record. The production is slick but this ends up sounding like one of those records from the '50s with the singer draped in velvet or satin that is so

uncool—it could be cool—but isn't. This just makes me want to listen to Petty Booka. —Lisa Weiss (Fat Wreck Chords, fatwreck.com)

USER ERROR: Hey Fuckers: Cassette

Most people will first want to know that this band contains an ex-member of the legendary '90s hardcore band Assfactor 4, and while this doesn't necessarily sound like AF4, you can certainly hear some of the same influences in these songs in both musical style as well as lyrically. At times, the songs have space for the melody to really thrive, sounding not unlike an angry version of some of the melodic punk bands to come out of Chicago like Naked Raygun. Good stuff. —Mark Twistworthy (Protagonist, protagonist_music@yahoo.com, protagonistmusic.bigcartel.com)

VACANT STATE: Chains: 7" EP

Sounds like it's just come back from Boston circa 1981 to unleash a little whoop-ass on a scene overripe with backpacks and nouveau-geek chic. Singer alone sounds like Choke Slapshot's unholy progeny. —Jimmy Alvarado (Warthog Speak)

VANITY: Vain in Life: LP

I heard people describe this as sounding like *All Skewed* up-era Skrewdriver, the pre sketchy era. Not true. This is straight up *Voice of Britain*, *Hail the New Dawn*-era Skrewdriver. These dudes nailed the sound of early '80s English skinhead music. If you love the

sound of Skullhead and Skrewdriver but can't hang with the idiotic White Power shit, this is the record for you. File next to Skullhead, 'Driver, No Remorse, and Battle Ruins. YOFC crew, pure class. —Tim Brooks (Katorga Works, katorgaworks@gmail.com)

WAR EMBLEM:

Constant Defeat: 12" EP

Interesting mix of early NYHC-influenced hardcore punk with some d-beat guitar stylings added in here and there for extra punch and heaviness. The bass that kicks off "So Far Gone," as it comes in with a slide and then builds up the tempo, is glorious! It effectively grabs your attention with its dark and dirty sound. This is how bass should always sound in hardcore. The songs are on the fast and faster spectrum, but they manage to throw in a few breakdowns here and there. I do think this would be more effective if they put fewer songs on here, as some of these songs being played at the same tempo, or close to, back to back tend to start sounding like the same song. Take the songs "So Far Gone," "Carcinogens," "Obsessed with Death" with its lumbering pace contrasting with the faster and shorter songs, and "Hard to Swallow," which has one of the coolest riffs I've heard in a while, and you would have a killer record. This is a good record that could be great with some heavy editing. —M.Avrq (Protagonist, protagonistmusic.tumblr.com / Narshardaa, narshardaa.com)

WAXEATER:

Baltimore Record: Cassette

I still remember my old college radio station getting a concept record which was—no shit—an album-length rumination on a trip to Epcot Center. If I had been dictator at that particular moment, the kid's body would still be strung up in the town square for us all to huck fetid vegetables and tattered copies of *CMJ* at. Seriously, *who the fuck cares about your trip to Epcot Center for even three minutes, let alone forty-five?* I don't often actively get angry at musicians or bands, but when I do it usually involves a concept album. Sure, they're a good way to garner critical notice and imply a certain amount of musical gravitas, blah blah, blah, but that aforementioned hypothetical dictatorial square has no 'absence of precocious crucified saps whose thematic "explorations" (quotes mine) deserve a stinky tomato to the face. So imagine my trepidation when I found that Waxeater's cassette was an album themed around *The Wire*, my favorite TV show of all time. I was so apprehensive at the prospect of listening to what would doubtlessly be a brutally bad collection of in-jokes that I took my time machine back to last summer, bought a bunch of farm stand veggies, and secured them in my basement so I'd be ready for the present day. But. BUT! Waxeater manages to pull it off: no public humiliation or cold cellar stockpile needed. Far from it. Their band house



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shares property lines with late-era Black Flag and the Touch And Go roster, with enough howl and shrill grit to warrant discussion of the TV series' often grim subject matter. This is not done without humor, however; as lines of dialogue become titles, choruses, and hooks on which to hang riffs throughout. I'm sure, too, that the energy present throughout this cassette must translate bombastically in a live setting. —Michael T. Fournier (Let's Pretend)

WE ARE HEX:

"W.D.M.R.s" b/w "Tongues": 7"

Artsy goth rock, like a strangled PJ Harvey singing Siouxsie. Hints of some dark wave like Joy Division or Killing Joke. I guess this is the new sound? I lived through the goth crap in the '80s and don't need to do it again. Seems like these dudes are a pretty big thing. I dunno; it all feels a bit contrived to me. —Tim Brooks (Latest Flame)

WEAK TEETH:

So You've Ruined Your Life: LP

Second LP from this Providence, Rhode Island hardcore/screamo band. Discordant, melancholic-yet-heavy guitars melded perfectly to tight, fast-paced rhythms, with lots of riffage injected into the proceedings a la modern Propagandhi. Too often this type of stuff plods along without a lot to distinguish one song from another. This is not the case with Weak Teeth, musically speaking, though the stylistically typical screamy

vocals tend to employ similar patterns throughout the entire album. Solid record, definitely worth your time. —Chad Williams (Riotous Outburst, riotousoutburst.bandcamp.com / Fita, fitarecords.co.uk / Tor Johnson, torjohnsonrecords.com)

WHATEVER BRAINS: //:://: 2 x EP

I admit I have a soft spot for Whatever Brains, not just 'cause they're "weird," but because they're ambitious in their weirdness. This release is a fine example of what I mean—two distinct EPs packaged as one, identified as SSR-63 and SSR-64, respectively. The second EP is the more conventional of the two, with four tunes showcasing their usual synth-laden noise mongering. The first, however, is a different beast entirely. According to Sorry State's website, it is comprised of "A series of linked compositions a la Venom's *At War with Satan* or the Subhumans' *From the Cradle to the Grave*, SSR-63's lyrics chronicle the plight of a Russian family who lived in complete isolation in remote Siberia for more than forty years." These linked compositions, which meld from one into the next, vary wildly in tone, texture, and attack—one minute you've got post-punk, next you're into some minimalist synth, then quieter acoustic passages, and then you're off on a hypnotic groove-skronk trip, and so on, stretched out over two sides of a 12" and clocking in at a total of roughly twenty minutes and change. It's a worthwhile ride, with enough engaging

twists and turns in delivery to keep one from losing interest, and impressive in scope. —Jimmy Alvarado (Sorry State, sorrystaterrecords.com)

WIDOWS WATCH:

This Message Repeats: LP

I put this record on and the sound falls into place in my ears like my fat ass fits into my favorite chair. I hear the Replacements. I hear Face To Face, Lucero, and the Gaslight Anthem. This five-piece band from Baltimore creates good, solid, no bullshit, American songwriting. This message repeats? Yes. And thank god it does. —John Mule (Toxic Pop, toxicpoprecords.com)

WORLD/INFERNO FRIENDSHIP

SOCIETY, THE: This Packed Funeral: LP/CD

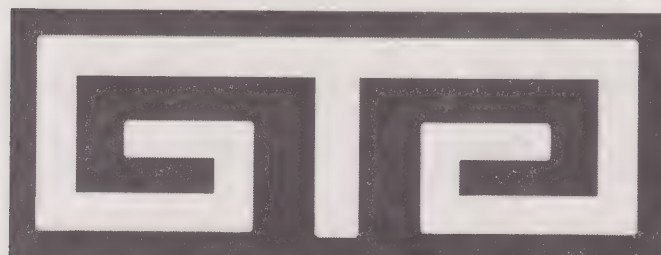
How many bands make you want to grab a partner and waltz your ass off until your feet hurt? I count just the one and that is The W/IFS, a collection of rabble rousers which, despite many attempts, defies direct classification. This album takes me on a musical journey that conjures up images of the darker reaches of Eastern Europe, Paris, and New Orleans to name but a few places; such is the eclectic quality of the songwriting across its course. *This Packed Funeral* is The W/IFS at its best and stands as an open invitation to the best party ever. —Rich Cocksedge (Alternative Tentacles, mail@alternativetentacles.com, alternativetentacles.com)

WRETCHED OF THE EARTH:

Fire to Their Houses: LP

Self proclaimed anti-colonial d-beat, Wretched Of The Earth are both heavy and beautiful. They have a nice balance between the two adjectives. The drum and bass are furiously quick and full-sounding, while the dual guitars sparkle through solos around a thread of rhythmic melodies. Two deep, raspy voices rise up over top, spitting about subjects of subjection and oppression at the hands of pious colonial settlers, as well as the residual impact into this century. I love this stuff and often play records like this while I'm falling asleep. This particular record has six tracks, most of which are each five or six minutes long. The instrumental breakdowns are peppered throughout each song, during which the guitar work is reminiscent of slower Maiden. Lyrics are exceptional as well. The last lines of the titular track are especially haunting: "subvert, set flame, refute, reclaim / subvert, set flame, they perish, we remain." Wretched Of The Earth is intelligent and memorable. —Kayla Greet (1859, 1859records.bandcamp.com / wretchedoftheearth.bandcamp.com)

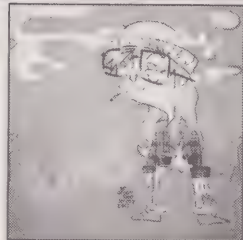
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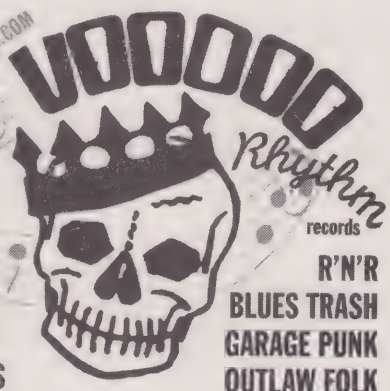
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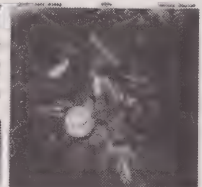
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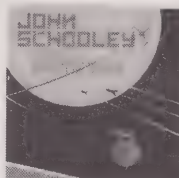
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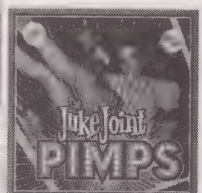
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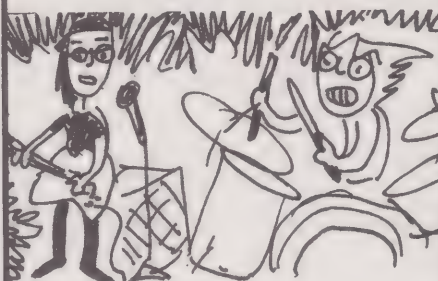
Here's some classic d-beat tunes from a pioneering band for the d-beat Swedish punk. Discard was formed in early mid 80s and members were involved with bands such as Job 47, a Pretent Bngt (Kor, Thriller and Agent 137).

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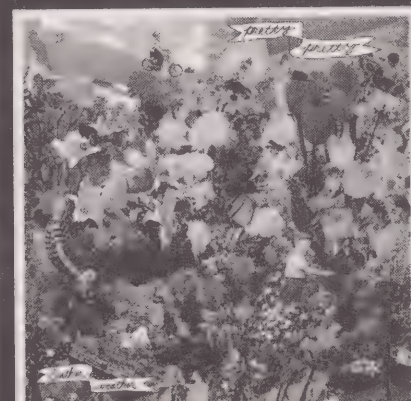
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- **Boss Tuneage**, PO Box 74,
Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19
2WB, United Kingdom
- **Cactus Music**,
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- **Chaos Rurale** c/o
Matthieu Ouellette, 2226
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J0E2J0, Canada
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“If you’ve
had sex,
you’ve had
bad sex.”

—Tricia | HAVE YOU HAD SEX
WITH THIS PERSON

ATARAXIA #9, \$?, 4 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 12 pgs.

A short chapbook compiled of four poems by various authors accompanied by doodly illustrations. A quick and worthy read. I recommend checking it out! —Robin Effup (rasasvada.net)

BIBLE OF CAVS FANDOM, THE, free, 8 1/2" x 11", newsprint, 28pgs.

This zine covers fandom of the Cleveland Cavaliers basketball team. The zine is very cut up and photocopied-looking—i.e. very punk. And it's well written. It gives glimpses into Cleveland life and into the interest of the writer's punk backgrounds. I wish the world were more like this: people making zines about their esoteric interests. I, alas, still think jocks are a problem, even in my advanced punk years. Not that these guys are jocks, just my narrow view of what I think jocks are. I hate organized sports to the point where I have a close friend who watches football and it vexes me. But with age comes the knowledge that one person's stupid thing is no more inherently stupid than another person's stupid thing. So if you're interested in basketball, I'd highly recommend dropping them a line. I would. —Billups (Cavs Zine, PO Box 602514, Cleveland, OH 44102)

CERTAIN PEOPLE I DON'T KNOW #2 and #5, \$1, 5 1/2" x 4 1/4", copied, 16 pgs.

Well-drawn portraits of people the author encounters on public transportation. The city is never mentioned, but I have encountered these people on public transit in various cities. It's like being on a bus with someone who's scribbling in a sketchbook and being able to peek into that sketchbook. —Lisa Weiss (aimeepijpers@gmail.com)

CRETINS OF DISTORTION #5 / KILL YR PARENTS GARDEN #9,

\$?, 7" x 8", copied, 6 pgs.

From the cold, insipid heart of America comes the explosively degenerate split fanzine you've been waiting for! *Cretins of Distortion* literally melts your brain with thirty-one retrospective reviews of Midwest punk bands. Emmy Ramone pays tribute to the important gems of punk history, such as Articles Of Faith (early '80s Chicago hardcore) who are "as interesting as the Big Boys and as in your face as Black Flag." Now that's something that will really get your liquefied frontal cortex boilin'! If you happened to have overlooked Phil 'N The Blanks, here's your chance to do just that with your record collection. Layout includes cool album art and old band photos of these rockin' Midwest babes amongst the praising reports of Gulcher Records bands. Last but not least is a word search featuring "Ten Sick Bands," one of them being my personal favorite of 2014: the weirdo, manic, punk sound outta Northwest Indiana, Coneheads! Flip and spin, on to *Kill Yr Parents Garden*. It's always refreshing to be able to commiserate with others on the decline of civilization but it isn't always the most welcomed conversation topic. This past year, in particular, has been an exceptionally weird and depressing one. Macklin's despondent introduction on the world's current state of disrepair got me clean in the gut. He interviews Tmac (of Glow God) on the OKC punk scene, squats in Germany, and examines the differences of political agendas/power of communities in the U.S. vs. Europe. This interview is so good; it gave me the chills. Sweet layout and copy machine art. This zine left me asking myself, "When is a better time for punk than now in the midst of all this bullshit?" —Robin Effup (Cretins Of Distortion, 2656 Dayton Ave., Columbus, OH 43202, emmyeatsbutts@gmail.com / Kill Yr Parents Garden, 1719 W. Albion, Chicago, IL 60626, macklinreed@aim.com)

EXTREME NOISE: 20 YEARS! #1, \$7.50 ppd., 7 3/4" x 10 1/2", offset, 52 pgs.

I remember back in 1992 when Dan and some folks from *Profane Existence* were in the Bay Area checking out Epicenter Records, which was a volunteer-run

record shop I used to work at, started by Tim Yohannon. Epicenter is long gone, but Extreme Noise is still here, despite the odds they have faced over time and at their various locations as they moved around Minneapolis. This zine is a oral history of the store from past and present volunteers, as well as long-time customers covering the beginning, dealing with landlords, financial struggles, meetings, strange customers, and all else that one encounters and faces in such a setting. The layout is clean with full color reproductions of flyers sprinkled throughout and live photos of bands that have played there in the past. Back in 2012, I went to Omaha to visit Mike Thrashead, and, on a whim, we decided to drive up to Minneapolis to check out the store. It turned out to be the best road trip I've had so far. Seriously, this place is well worth the drive from anywhere. It was like stepping into punk rock heaven, if there is such a thing. Great prices, friendly staff (no kidding), and a killer selection. I found more than a few things in the bins that were on my want list. It's definitely a place I hope to make it back to. I walked out of there with the mindset of "Fuck yeah! Punk rock!" Reading this zine illustrates how important such a place is to the local community and beyond. It's also clear from the amount of effort they put into producing this that this place means a hell of a lot. —M.Avrq (407 West Lake St., MPLS, MN 55408, extremenoise.com)

GOOD LORD #0, \$?, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 16 pgs.

Collages. The cover is blue. It was probably fun to make. Looks like there are some original drawings. It contains the word "faggot." Maybe the author is gay. Maybe not. There is not enough here to make me care. —Lisa Weiss (crazyandthebrains@gmail.com)

HAVE YOU HAD SEX WITH THIS PERSON, \$2, 6 1/2" x 10", 12 pgs.

If you've had sex, you've had bad sex. If you've been in love before, you've most likely experienced heartbreak. Most of us try to forget the bad sex and move on from the broken heart. We don't often tell more than a few close friends about these experiences, but two seasoned zinesters decided to publish a zine laying it all out for you. *Have You Had Sex with This Person* is a collaborative zine from zinesters Red Velvet and How Are Your Insides? Depending on which side you read from, you'll either get haikus of hook ups or cringe-worthy short stories. Red Velvet supplies the shorts—some stories needing only a paragraph—other particularly interesting recounts requiring a few pages. At times, the things said to her on first dates or mid-coitus sound too awful to be true. A particularly awful first date introduces a man who comments on Red Velvet's weight by describing her as "sturdy." Yes. The same adjective you could use to describe a piece of furniture is a perfect description of a body type. Flipping the zine over, we're given haikus of relationships, sexual encounters, and past loves from How Are Your Insides? I love how the format of a haiku allows the reader to get just enough information, but also leaves you wondering. One of my favorites starts: "You threw up on my dick." Always a classy move. After I finished reading, I thought about all the bad sex I've had and all the heartbreak I'd been through in my life. These two writers found a way to make me laugh, shock me, and leave me wanting a second issue. And that's what you should look for in good sex isn't it? To be left wanting more? Wait. —Tricia (No address listed.)

HOI POLLOI SKAZINE, \$5, 5" x 8 1/2", copied, 113 pgs.

Every ska record that has ever been reviewed might be in this anthology. At least anything up until the winter of 2001. Because that is when this zine was published. The dudes who put this together asked that I make it known; there are still a lot back issues, so if you're into ska, this is a resource that may very well be useful to you. I'm not a fan of ska, but I skimmed through this zine and there is a lot of info. It would be a damn shame if all of these back issues were never read and got

trashed. It feels like a good resource worth preserving and archiving. —Simon Sotelo (Hoi Polloi Skazine, PO Box 13347, Rochester, NY 14613-0347)

NADA: THE DADA MAGAZINE ABOUT NOTHING,

\$?, 8 1/2" x 11", copied, 20 pgs.

The title says it all. It's a fun and sarcastic comedy lampooning North Korea's dictator, our moronic former commander in chief, and his first-hand minions. A large portion reads as a script, reminiscent of Hollywood's recent wrangle with political controversy, which *Nada* doesn't miss the chance to take a jab at as well. Get ready to be *punished*. —Robin Effup (Bryce, gammasweargreen@gmail.com, nadadamagazine.tumblr.com)

NO PLACE FOR A VACATION, \$3, 5" x 8 1/2", copied, 78pgs.

Going into this zine, I was a little scared. It's thick—and from what I could tell skimming through the first/last couple of pages—was that it was about Israel. The zines on my bookshelf are a far cry from politics, typically, and I hesitated before diving into this. To my surprise, it didn't strike me as a politically heavy zine. The author, Andru Okun, was a New Orleans resident down on his luck who decided to go on Birthright because it literally took him out of the situation he was living in, even if it was just a ten-day tour. This is a solid autobiographical odyssey and deconstruction of the way the Middle East is perceived. This zine isn't scary at all; it was really quite beautiful and sometimes sad. That's just one way the world works. —Simon Sotelo (Andru Okun, noplaceforavacation@gmail.com)

ORGAN GRINDER #4, \$7, 8 1/2" x 11", 26 pgs.

Organ Grinder is, hands down, one of the most impressive zines in my collection. Full of quizzes, brain teasers, and the odd joke and comic or two, the zine is entertaining, sarcastic, and really fucking clever. Each page contains multiple

record label. It consists of reviews of the (mostly) CD reissues that started popping up in the 1990s (as well as some of the cassette and CD-R only releases Bluurg has done), how the editor relates to them, and how he acquired them over the years. There are bits of history and record nerd information here and there, but it's mostly a personal perspective. I always find it interesting how people get a hold of punk music over the years, how these releases have become a part of their lives, and why they have connected to whatever it is in the way that they have. No matter the era, those who are excited about this stuff are going to be stoked as hell to find it—whether in a chain store in the mall or the local record shop—and it appears no matter how long ago those releases may have come out, they still resonate. There are also some zine reviews and beverage reviews. Pretty cool issue, and I discovered some bands I had never even heard of at the back in the "More Bits" section. —M.Avg (516 Third St. NE, Massillon, OH 44646)

THROAT CULTURE #15, \$2, 5" x 8 1/2", copied, 26pgs.

Throat Culture is a fun review zine out of Chico, CA that contains tape, vinyl, and zine reviews mixed with madlibs, a couple diary entries about broken tape decks, and fixing your bike. This zine feels good and that's probably because every review is positive. I can appreciate a zine that uses its time to tell me about something good and worthwhile. The writer is very upbeat and excited. You get a lot of content for two bucks. —Simon Sotelo (Gonk Publishing, 2700 White Ave. #3, Chico, CA 95973)

TRAVEL ON #5, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 32 pgs.

Through letters, personal stories, and lists, David Solomon chronicles his time spent living and working in the wilderness. Solomon gives raw emotional insight to the internal struggles of working seasonal jobs in the beautiful yet isolating North American forests. *Travel On* is an ever-familiar callous reflection on

"With age comes the knowledge that one person's stupid thing is no more inherently stupid than another person's stupid thing."

—Billups Allen | THE NOBLE OF CAVS FANDOM

features which looks busy but avoids becoming messy or overwhelming thanks to the even and clean layout, as well as the vibrant color printing. Also included is an impressively compiled state-by-state Pull Out Booze Map informing readers of the times you can buy alcohol in specific regions. In contrast to the colorful cacophony of fun in the rest of the zine, the only thing that seemed out of place was the six page short story about a homeless hitchhiker. Unfortunately, it came off less thought provoking and more melodramatic and preachy. Overall, I highly recommend challenging yourself to the puzzles of *Organ Grinder*. Tally up your score and meet me in the Winner's Circle to see how you rank up. —Ashley Ravelo (Kung Fu Jimmy, organgrindermagazine.com, kungfujimmy@organgrindermagazine.com)

PARANOIZE #35, \$3 ppd. U.S., \$4 ppd. International, or trade, 8 1/2" x 5 1/2", copied, 20 pgs.

This is your guide to what is going on punk-wise in New Orleans. Also covers metal, sludge, doom, hardcore, and stoner rock. The editor admits it is by no means complete coverage, but it is definitely worth reading. Interviews with Evil Army, Mule Skinner, Kyle Thomas, and House Of Goats. Rants about New Orleans. There are reviews of stuff other than New Orleans bands. The dense text is word-processed, so it's easy to read, but the zine could use a few more pictures. —Lisa Weiss (PO Box 2334, Marrero, LA, 70073-2334)

RASASVADA #12, \$1, 5 1/2" x 4 1/4", copied, 16 pgs.

Hmmm. Yeah. A small, quick collection of visuals here. Material ranges from a simple ink drawing of Bobby Hill dancing with Ladybird (that's a *King of the Hill* reference, folks) to a sketch of a shoe, to a few remarkably good portraits and collages, and a few questionable abstract pieces. There's absolutely no context here—I have no idea if this is from one person or a group of them—and without that context I can't say I was particularly enrapt. —Keith Rosson (Rasasvada, 330 E. Commercial St. Apt. A, Springfield, MO 65803)

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING #70, 2 stamps or trade, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 40 pgs.

Do you like the Subhumans (UK)? Culture Shock? Citizen Fish? Then you might want to check this out. The entire issue is dedicated to covering the releases of those bands, and well as a few of the other bands that appeared on the Bluurg

growing up in the unfavorable suburbs—along with the perpetual search for love, meaning, and balance in a world unfamiliar to the American norm. —Robin Effup (David Solomon, 606 Pinewalk Dr., Brandon, FL 33510, dcsolomon.com)

TREPANATION: ELECTIVE SURGERY YOU NEED LIKE A HOLE IN THE HEAD! \$4, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 16 pgs.

Emi Gennis is a comics creator to keep an eye on. I enjoyed her previous self-published minicomics as well as *Unknown Origins & Untimely Ends*, a collection she edited and contributed to that revolves around bizarre deaths and weird occurrences. Her edutainment approach has become her trademark, while her thick black lines pleasantly resemble that of Gilbert Hernandez sans the voluptuous ladies. The theme this time around is trepanation. There's nothing like holes in the head to pique your interest! As Gennis documents through research and interviews, the motivations for drilling into your skull wildly vary from attempts to cure physical and mental ailments, release bad mojo, and to get high. I find it infinitely fascinating that white people always find a way to appropriate indigenous practices in hopes of getting fucked up. The zine acknowledges contemporary trepanation converts who vehemently believe that the incisions have drastically improved their lives. I guess I can't argue with results. If you want to open your skull, then that's your own prerogative, right? To each their own and such. Gennis always has me thinking this way, which is a sign of an effective storyteller. I'm hoping one day to be the proud owner of an Emi Gennis graphic novel or omnibus. Until then, I suggest snatching up her other minicomics. —Sean Arenas (Emi Gennis, emigennis.com)

WELCOME TO THE CULTURAL ÆTHER #11, \$1, 5 1/2" x 8 1/2", copied, 44 pgs.

Yet another great addition to the ongoing epic of *Cultural Æther*. I like that it is just a big collage of random information and art. The columns are mostly about science, medicine, and history. Interesting stuff and cool layout. I'd buy that for a dollar! —Robin Effup (The Cultural Æther, 2440 E Tudor Rd. #364, Anchorage, AK 99507, theculturalaether@outlook.com)



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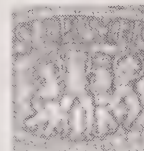


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Clothes, Clothes, Clothes, Music, Music, Music, Boys, Boys, Boys
By Viv Albertine, 432 pgs.

Viv Albertine, the guitarist for The Slits, was one of the core group of punks who helped create the original London scene. She was close friends with Johnny Rotten, Sid Vicious, Mick Jones, Joe Strummer, Keith Levene, Palmolive, Ari Up, and so on. She hung around Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood's SEX shop, played in the infamous Flowers Of Romance, and helped define the influential sound of The Slits. So you would think that her autobiography would provide rich insights into the people and

having a baby. But she suffers miscarriage after miscarriage and the obsession begins to turn into madness. Shortly after she finally succeeds in delivering a daughter, she is diagnosed with cervical cancer and the threads of her life fray even further. Suddenly, as a reader, I'm grabbed by a narrator whose intensity is profound. The seventy-five pages or so that cover her miscarriages and struggle with cancer are some of the most moving and engaging autobiographical passages I've ever read. Perhaps this helps explain why the first part of the book struck me as flat and superficial—that was an entirely different Viv Albertine living a completely differently life, inconsequential in comparison to the one she now finds herself in more than twenty-five years later.

The book continues with her rediscovery of empowerment through music, re-teaching herself how to play guitar, the slow, painful collapse of her marriage, her pondering an affair with Vincent Gallo (don't do it, Viv!), and her eventual emergence as a solo performer with the release of *The Vermilion Border* (2012). While not as consistently brilliant as the superior *Violence Girl*, Albertine's *CCCMMBBB* is a remarkable read in places. While her portrayals of the 1970s and early 1980s are breezy and incomplete, be prepared to be gutted by the harrowing portrayal of her adult years. —Kevin Dunn (St. Martin's Press, 175 Fifth Ave., NY, NY 10010)

Dodgeball High

By Bradley Sands, 188 pgs.

Bradley Sands is one of the foremost comedy writers in the bizarre fiction movement. He has a knack for writing likeably dislikeable characters and throwing them into wacky situations. In the case of *Dodgeball High*, that character is Justin Lucas. Justin is basically the coolest teenager ever, at least in his own mind. When his parents move and he has to go to a new school, he's got to start from scratch to prove to his classmates else that he totally rules at everything. Except there's one snag: at Dodgeball High, only one thing is studied, and it is way brutal.

There's a lot more at risk at Dodgeball High's dodgeball games than getting a rubber ball in your face. These kids have upped the ante. Dodgeball is a life or death matter. Fire. Explosions. Razorblades. Not everyone makes

“The Minutemen are a mood shifter, the friendship that drove the band infusing every song with contagious goodwill. I hugged my wife.”

—Chris Terry *Double Nickels Forever: A tribute to Double Nickels on the Dime and the Minutemen*

events of that era. In fact, the media blurbs on the back of the book inform me that this is one of the greatest autobiographies from that scene. But it isn't (Surprisingly, at least to me, John Lydon's *Rotten* holds that honor).

To be fair, I need to point out that the book I read right before Albertine's was *Violence Girl* by Alice Bag of the Bags. While both books have a lot in common—from detailing a woman's struggle within a male-dominated subculture to their structure of short, two-to-five page chapters offering digestible narrative nuggets—there is a distinct difference regarding each book's narrative voice. Within twenty pages of *Violence Girl*, I was totally smitten by Alice, thoroughly invested in the stories she was telling me. One hundred pages into *CCCMMBBB*, I still couldn't decide if I even liked Viv. I simply didn't have a sense of who she was. The reason was that her presentation of what should have been completely engaging stories—such as her on-again/off-again romance with Mick Jones, her affair with Johnny Thunders and heroin, her troubled relationship with Ari Up and the rest of The Slits, her confusing friendship with Sid Vicious—are all presented rather superficially. As a result, I don't understand what she is feeling at any given moment nor am I particularly invested in her life story. When she writes that she was devastated for years about the break up of The Slits, I just have to take her word for it. The breakup marks the end of “Side One” of the book, which covers her youth in punk and takes up around two-thirds of the book. But I'm starting not to care and beginning to look around the room for other books to distract me.

All of this changes in “Side Two.” In her post-Slits life, after marrying and settling down into domestic drudgery, Viv becomes obsessed with

it out alive, but those who do will be well-rewarded. Fortunately, Justin knows what he's doing. He's cool under pressure, and a hell of a dodgeball player. Or is he?

What makes this book such a party is how it takes the concept of the unreliable narrator to such an extreme. Justin is one of those kids who has a habit of lucking into things and then taking full credit for them. When he makes a mind-blowing dodge or a killer throw, he chalks it up to his talent, even though it's pretty clear that most of what goes right for him is a coincidence.

And he is such a kidder. He kids with his friends. Well, they aren't really his friends, so much as classmates who have refrained from killing him or, in the case of his love interest, serial killer Dodie Manson, attempted to kill him and couldn't do it. But he kids with the reader too. He'll set up a scenario, only to throw in a “just kidding,” and explain what really happened. This stunt is handled so adeptly, that it never got old, and I laughed my butt off every time. If you haven't read any Bradley Sands yet, this is a great place to start. —MP Johnson (Eraserhead Press, PO Box 10065, Portland, OR 97269, eraserheadpress.com)

Double Nickels Forever: A tribute to Double Nickels on the Dime and the Minutemen

By Various Artists, 180 pgs.

My wife and I were driving home and I was down on our remote neighborhood, my job, and lack of writing time. Then the Minutemen came on the radio. I'd never heard the song, but couldn't mistake the burbling bass, skittering drums, and blurted vocals. I listened for a moment, chuckled

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In *And You Belong*, acclaimed director Julia Ostertag delivers a visual and musical rocket ride through the queer music underground telling the story of two girl electro hip hop act Screaming Club and their international network of friends. While Screaming Club's music has been the soundtrack for a decade of underground fun, friendship and activism, Julia Ostertag created a fascinating document on a new queer self-esteem through original footage, archival footage, music videos, and photographs.

BRINK vision

at a lyric, then looked up at my wife driving with palm trees passing beyond her and thought how lucky I was to live near the beach with such an amazing woman, in the range of a cool radio station. The Minutemen are a mood shifter, the friendship that drove the band infusing every song with contagious goodwill. I hugged my wife. I went home and wrote. I've since found a new job.

The Minutemen inspire great things. Case in point: this collection of comics and drawings based on songs from their legendary double album, *Double Nickels on the Dime*. Fifty-nine artists (including John Porcellino and Dmitry Samarov) each bring a different song to life, creating psychedelic narratives, sharing stories that relate to the songs, or just taking a crack at drawing drummer George Hurley's floppy '80s skater bangs. The art is varied, but consistently rad, and the narratives are all imaginative, a testament to the power of the band's emotionally direct lyrics.

The book itself is a classy-looking trade paperback, the art in black and white. A small press from Virginia ran a crowd funding campaign to publish it, and they've achieved something terrific: a tribute that transcends its inspiration, providing perspective on a dense album, adding dimensions to the Minutemen's music, and standing on its own as a unique collection of art—just like a Minutemen album. —Chris Terry (leafandsignal.com)

“Dysfunction is never the wind in your sails. The Ramones were great in spite of their problems, rather than because of them.”

—Jeff Fox, *Punk Rock Blitzkrieg*

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg

By Marky Ramone with Richard Herschlag, 416 pgs.

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg tells the story of Marky Ramone's life behind the kit, playing drums for one of the most influential and iconic punk bands of all time, The Ramones. Long before any books were written about the band, wild rumors about The Ramones had been the stuff of punk rock urban legend. Such as: all of The Ramones had served in Vietnam, Joey was in a mental institution, Dee Dee was a heroin addict and a street hustler, Johnny was a right-winger, Tommy had dropped off the grid and was the owner a fleabag hotel in Florida, Marky was in a revolving door of rehab, and CJ was a former roadie who was AWOL from the Marines.

One of the most pervasive myths was that Phil Spector had pulled a gun on the band during the recording of *End of the Century*. (The version of this myth that I'd heard back in the '80s was that after a long day of recording, Spector had held them all at gunpoint, making them play pinball at his house all night.)

Punk Rock Blitzkrieg cuts these tall tales down to size, but Marky's firsthand accounts of the animosity in the band are gut-wrenching. They turn out to be far more severe than the rumors ever had been.

The rumor was that Joey had written “The KKK Took My Baby Away” about Johnny, and that Joey and Johnny didn't like each other very much. According to *Blitzkrieg*, that song wasn't about Johnny at all, but Joey and Johnny did not speak directly to each other for years. Like divorced parents, they would shuttle messages back and forth through Marky or the band's tour manager, even if they were riding together in the van.

As many gruesome stories as there are, *Blitzkrieg* doesn't read like mud-slinging or an airing of old beefs. It just seems like Marky's explanation of the way things happened, warts and all. His frustrations with his bandmates are quite apparent, but he says he considers them his brothers. Marky loved the energy they were creating and said it made all of the aggravations worthwhile.

And Marky does cop to his own shortcomings. Alcohol slowly gets the best of him and his life spins out, resulting in the loss of his career, identity as a Ramone, and his longtime girlfriend.

He gives an honest glimpse into the struggles of an addict with a horrifying account of a being driven back to drinking by a case of the D.T.s. After several false starts, he finally drags himself out of the pit of alcoholism and rejoins the band.

Some say that the grudges and tensions were an essential ingredient to what made The Ramones so great. Dysfunction is never the wind in your sails; it's the unnoticed anchor dragging along the ocean floor behind you. It's a subtle but important distinction to say The Ramones were great *in spite of* their problems, rather than because of them.

Which is all the more reason to appreciate that they ever existed. Finding four people anywhere who can click musically is like catching lightning in a bottle. Yet The Ramones came together at that special time and place. Then they stayed together (albeit in a state of wild dysfunction)

long enough to record fourteen studio albums and play thousands of shows all over the world, lighting the fuse for a worldwide punk rock revolution. That's nothing short of a miracle. —Jeff Fox

Punk USA: The Rise and Fall of Lookout! Records

By Kevin Prested, 191 pgs.

Punk USA is a primarily oral history account of the story of one of the favorite punk labels of the 1980s and '90s, Lookout! Records. Started in the '80s by Larry Livermore and David Hayes, some seminal punk bands of that time—Screeching Weasel, The Queers, The Mr. T Experience, Operation Ivy, Green Day, and Avail—all released albums with the label. And then, in 2005, Lookout! for all practical purposes, went out of business. What happened and why? That's what *Punk USA* tries to explore, but only does so to some degree.

The first half of the book talks about the rise of the label: how it was started, what releases were put out, how certain people were involved, and the East Bay punk scene in general. Sometimes this can be painstakingly detailed, such as the information on seemingly every release from the early years and how each respective band got “signed” to the label.

The second half of the book details the fall of the label, which basically

details a he said/he said between the co-owner for many years, Chris Appelgren, and the various bands signed to the label. It can be confusing, but what I came away with from reading all the back and forth is that perhaps a better subtitle for the book would've been *The Rise and Fall of Chris Appelgren*. He's quoted more than anyone and is allowed to give his point of view on the entire history, which is only fair, as he's accused of being the reason for the label's financial failure—one far greater than I had imagined. According to the book, “Lookout somehow squandered what may have been upwards of \$50 million between 1991 and the time of their bankruptcy,” most of which was from Green Day and Operation Ivy royalties.

Multiple times, Appelgren notes that he didn't have a business background and once co-owners Livermore and Peter Hynes (the new co-owner who came on after David Hayes left the label years before) left in the late '90s, it appears that poor business sense is what caused the label to fail.

Author Kevin Prested noted that he couldn't fit everything in the book that he wanted: “Huge chunks ended up being trimmed. As much as I love Brent's TV or Surrogate Brains, the casual reader might not be interested in five or six pages of writing on each of these 7” releases.” You're right. What the reader of a book about a label as important as Lookout wants are interviews with the bands that made the biggest impression on the punk scene, *as well as* the average bands. That being said, there are no interviews with any of the guys from Green Day, Operation Ivy, co-founder David Hayes, Ben Weasel from Screeching Weasel, Tim Barry from Avail, or Kevin Army, who produced a ton of releases for the label. There's also nothing extensive from Larry Livermore.

Anytime a book is written, it's good for the author to admit any biases (like the fact that Kevin Prested used to write for Lookout's blog and website, which I discovered doing a search for him online) and limitations. If you can't get someone to talk to you, you need to admit that up front and also acknowledge that your book will suffer because of that. To compensate, Prested should've drawn from other sources than just original interviews. For example, sure, the members of Green Day may be hard to contact, but it's important to let the reader know you, the author, tried. And if you can't get them to speak with you, surely they have made comments about Lookout or those involved with the label in interviews.

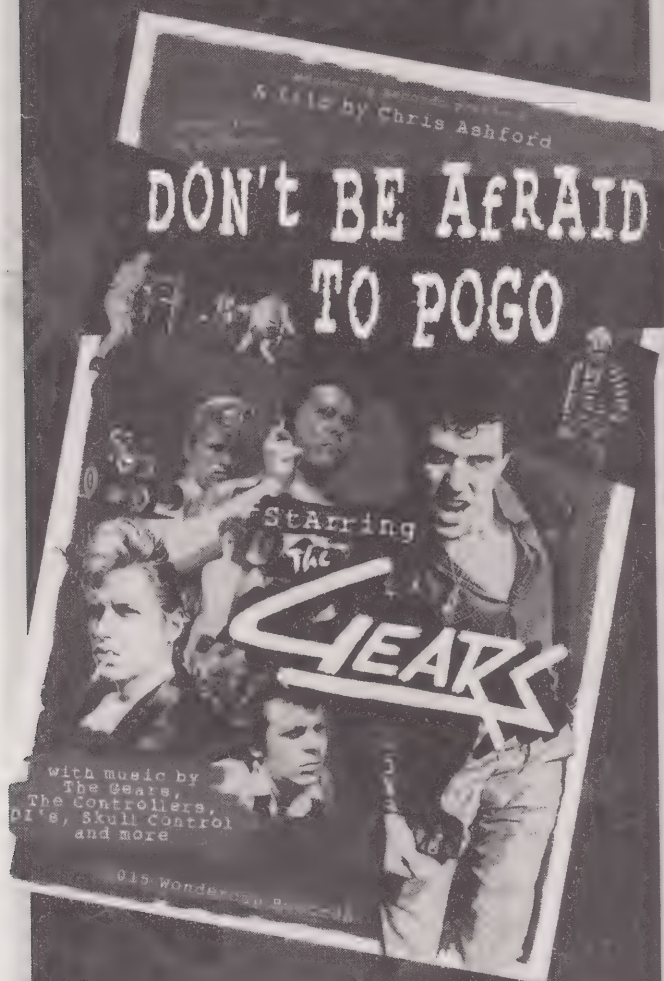
For example, I wondered where Livermore and Hayes got the money to start Lookout—a subject never addressed in the book. According to an online video interview with Hayes, it was from Larry selling pot he grew. That's the kind of information that needs to be in a book about the history of a record label. There are many other pieces I felt were missing—things I wanted to know, but whose gaps weren't filled due to the lack of participants.

What is here is only one part of the story of Lookout Records. The other part still needs to be written. —Kurt Morris (Microcosm, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227)

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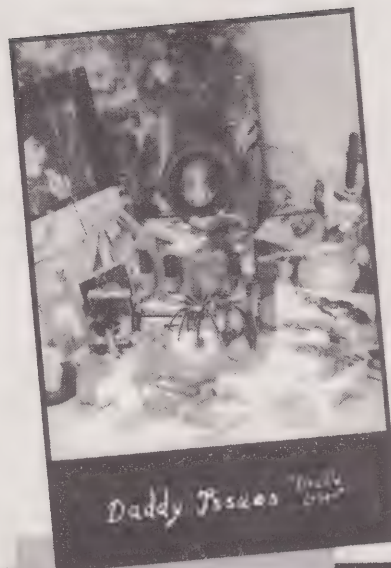
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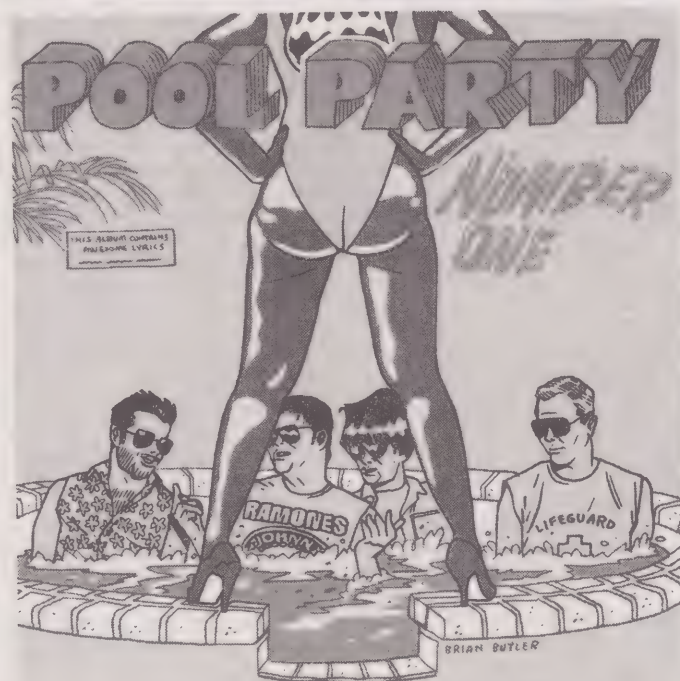
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Clockwork Orange County: DVD

Clockwork Orange County, which was originally going under the fitting moniker *We Were Feared*, is basically a rework of a much earlier film, *Urban Struggle: The Battle of the Cuckoo's Nest*. Like its predecessor, it recounts the tale of the legendary Cuckoo's Nest, an early '80s punk club nestled deep in the heart of one of the country's most virulently reactionary counties. OC was ground zero for Southern California's much-ballyhooed and exceedingly influential second wave of punk/first wave of hardcore, and during its relatively brief existence the Nest was one of the few clubs out that way that provided a place for that wave of bands a stage on which to cut their teeth. As a result, the club, in turn, found itself turned into ground zero for the cultural war that mainstream America waged on punk, a war that resulted in police harassment of the clubs patrons, pitched battles with denizens of the "urban cowboy" bar which shared its parking lot, and a pitched legal battle with the City of Costa Mesa over its very right to exist.

Utilizing period footage from *Urban Struggle* and interviews of recent vintage, the film recounts the tale in swift but holistic detail—the importance of the venue to the scene, the love/hate relationship between the punks and club owner Jerry Roach, and the shitstorm that ensued in the streets, in the courts, and in the media. It's also filled with enough live footage of the Circle Jerks, Black Flag, Adolescents, TSOL, and so on to whet the appetite

of fans, music archeologists, and historians looking solely for some great "old school" performances. Though clearly a DIY effort, with the occasional clunky transition and music cue, the filmmakers tell the tale well, deftly keeping the proceedings engaging without letting things devolve into neither a surreal pastiche of vaguely connected footage nor a rigid drone of talking heads. There are scant few attempts at historical documentation that manage to do this particular area of interest justice, and this is definitely one of 'em. —Jimmy Alvarado (Endurance Pictures, no address listed)

Positive Force: More Than a Witness:

30 Years of Punk Politics in Action: DVD

The DC punk scene is probably the best documented in the world. There's *Banned in DC*, a photo book that came out at the end of the '80s and *Dance of Days: Two Decades of Punk in the Nation's Capital*, a thick tome chronicling DC-area non-mainstream rock. Recently, Dave Grohl (he played drums in *Scream*) took viewers down the *Sonic Highway* through the District for a chat with Don Zientara, the producer of most of the Dischord catalog. As of this writing, I am praying to the Madonna of Dupont Circle that the Oakland screening of *Salad Days: The DC Punk Revolution* will not sell out. Do we really need another movie where we watch Fugazi and listen to Ian MacKaye talk about Fugazi?

The answer is yes. In the late '80s and early '90s, if you wanted to see Fugazi and many other great bands such as Jawbox, Nation Of Ulysses, Beefeater and Fire Party—and Basque and European politico-punk bands such as Negu Gorriak and Chumbawamba—in DC, it was most often at a show put on by Positive Force. All of the shows benefitted one local organization or another, were all-ages, and five dollars. They were held in church basements in neighborhoods where condos now command high rents but then were places where tenants were organizing and Positive Force was supporting their efforts.

This film chronicles the efforts of this group through the shows they put on, the meetings they held in their community house, and the work they tried to do to affect change. It's one thing to yell, "Fuck the system." It's quite another to work to keep people from getting fucked by the system. PF gave the DC scene a character not found in other places. That character, to some—myself included—felt a little puritanical at times. I lived in DC

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during the part of the time covered in the film, went to a couple of meetings and helped out with a couple of shows, and attended many more. It was a real culture shock when I moved to San Diego and a "benefit" show was to raise money for the drummer's paternity test. But it was nice to drink alcohol and listen to live punk rock at the same time.

Any group of committed, idealistic, young (or young at heart) folks are bound to have disagreements, right? Well, not according to this movie. There are a couple of times where breaks in ranks are briefly mentioned, but every good documentary has a plot, and part of that plot is conflict. Instead of glossing over disagreements, it might have been more interesting to see how these folks worked through their differences.

This film is great for going beyond the music and showing that there is more to punk rock than the elements of clothing and fast music that became part of its commercialization in the early '90s, but, in the end, it comes off as a little too one-sided and self-congratulatory. —Lisa Weiss (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA, 94623, morethanawitness.com)

Rye Coalition: *The Story of the Hard Luck 5*: DVD

Never got into Rye Coalition. I first heard of them from their now-famous split 12" with Karp, but at the time they always came across as a weird and distancing amalgam of emo and post-rock; jagged and seriously devoid of hooks and, well, kind of boring. Turns out I was wrong about that. The film shows the band to be a lot of things, but boring isn't one of them. But, hey, that's where I was at at the time.

The Story of the Hard Luck 5 starts at the beginning and shows the band from their roots: a bunch of New Jersey kids in the mid-nineties playing VFW halls and basements, half of them touring before they could even drive. In many ways, it's the same story for a lot of bands that lived through the feeding frenzy of the mid-nineties punk explosion: the band plays shows, slowly rises in popularity, begins putting out records, then tours incessantly and works their asses off for a number of years while muscling through any number of shit jobs that are easy enough to leave to go on tour. *That* cycle, right?

And after a few years, a ton of shows, and a few full lengths they decide to give full time touring a shot and just hustle. A few things begin to click into place: Steve Albini engineers an album. They get opening slots for Queens Of The Stone Age, the Mars Volta, At The Drive-In. Finally it

happens—in 2003 they get signed to Dreamworks, a major label, and Dave Grohl produces their record. But in keeping with the band's history of shitty luck, Dreamworks promptly goes bankrupt and is incorporated into another major that wants nothing to do with the band or their album. The label sits on the record. The band still muscled on in spite of no new album, slowing momentum, and growing tension in the band.

Finally the album's released on Gern Blandsten, a NJ label that's run by a friend of theirs and most likely one that's now too small for them, but at this point the band just wants it out, right? Shit's imploding; tensions are high. And in 2006 the band breaks up. They'd gotten close to that idea of "rock success"—i.e. just being able to make a living playing in a band—but it just never quite happened. Just always a bit out of reach.

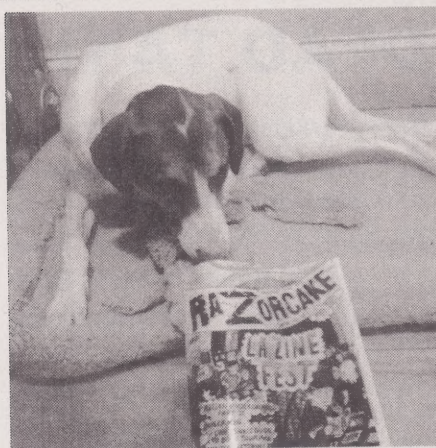
In 2010, at the behest of a band member's father, they get back together to play a show for his birthday; it's one of the most touching moments in the film. And that's essentially where *The Story...* leaves off, with these five longtime friends who almost had the dream by the tail and then just watched it kind of vanish.

Like I said, I was never really a fan of the band, but the film itself is excellent. It was totally engaging for someone who was not that into them, so this shit's probably *enthraling* to someone who's a fan, you know? Jenni Matz did a stellar job at directing and editing. The pacing's just right and is full of solid live footage from all eras. The interviews show that the band were, well, often kind of dicks—but goddamn, they could own a stage. (I'm still not that into their recorded output, but there's no denying that even on video they are a fun and absolutely captivating band to watch.)

I think the film's greatest strength is that it serves as a great snapshot into a volatile time for both punk and the music industry as a whole, and shows a band really hustling in their prime. It's heavy with personality—that's good television right there—and those accents just kill me. When guitarist Jon Gonnelli's grandmother, in her heavy Jersey accent, laments the fact that the band hasn't been able to put any money away ("Not even putting away ten dollahs in the bank!") after all their years on the road, it's absolutely charming. Really well done. —Keith Rosson (MatzOrific Productions, 203 Windsor Rd., Pottstown, PA 19464)



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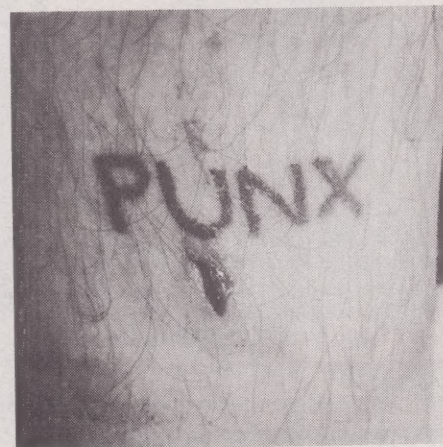
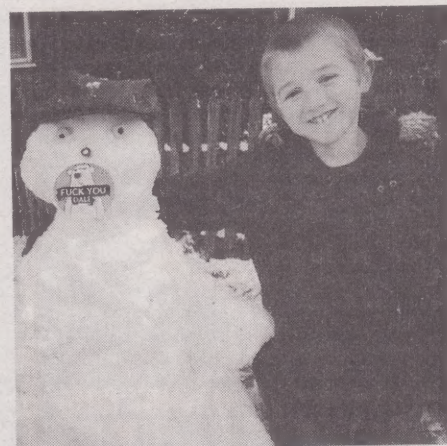
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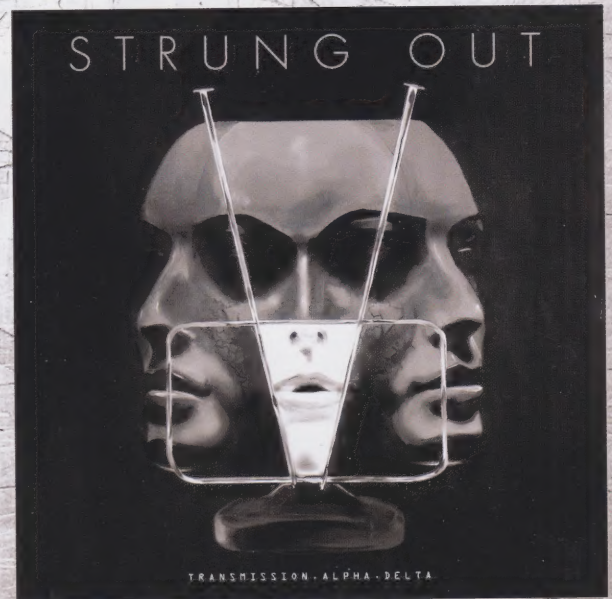
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